

## CONTENTS

Alabama and the Appalachian Iron and Coal Town Boom, 1889-1893 <i>by Stuart Seely Sprague</i> .....	85
The Collapse of Biracial Unionism: The Alabama Coal Strike of 1908 <i>by Richard A. Straw</i> .....	92
To Uplift a State and Nation: The Formative Years of the Alabama League of Women Voters, 1920-1921 <i>by Mary E. Swenson</i> .....	115
Nineteenth Century Montgomery Authors <i>by Benjamin B. Williams</i> .....	136
Love of Labor: A Note on Daniel Pratt's Employment Practices <i>by Randall M. Miller</i> .....	146
Henry W. Hilliard and the Southern Caucus of 1848-49: A Letter to John Macpherson Berrien <i>by Royce C. McCrary</i> .....	151

## BOOK REVIEWS

Carter (Editor), Conwell, <i>Magnolia Journey: A Union Veteran Revisits the Former Confederate States</i> , <i>by William Warren Rogers</i> .....	154
Bloom (Editor), <i>The American Territorial System</i> , <i>by Richard A. Bartlett</i> .....	155
Williams, <i>Tennessee During the Revolutionary War</i> , <i>by Lawrence C. Henry</i> .....	156
McGovern (Editor), <i>Colonial Pensacola and Andrew Jackson and Pensacola</i> , <i>by Jay Higginbotham</i> .....	157
Heer, <i>Challenge of Youth</i> , <i>by Albert D. Perkins, III</i> .....	158

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Milo B. Howard, Jr., Editor

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## ALABAMA AND THE APPALACHIAN IRON AND COAL TOWN BOOM, 1889-1893

by

Stuart Seely Sprague

The Jack and the Beanstalk growth of Birmingham and an ever increasing demand for iron and iron products triggered extensive land speculations up and down the spine of Appalachia. At least one hundred and thirty "industrial towns" reached the platting stage. Alabama accounted for seventeen of that number, but more significantly accounted for four of the twenty whose Grand Land Sale grossed more than \$100,000.

The first entrant in this round of speculation was W. P. Rice who earned the sobriquet, "The King of the Town Builders." Rice was a Maine born Horatio Alger. He migrated into Vermont and became State Prison Superintendent. In 1883 Rice left for Kansas City with less than \$100 in his pocket. He platted Clyde and created the Clyde State Bank. In 1886 he established four additional banks, each in a different Kansas town and he continued in this vein for the remainder of the decade. Between 1888 and 1892 the population of western Kansas halved. Perhaps Rice foresaw the trend for in 1888 he plunged into his first non-Kansas speculation, organizing The First National Bank of Denison. He then tripled the capitalization of his Texas bank. All of this was prologue to Rice's first Appalachian speculation, Fort Payne.<sup>1</sup>

By this time Rice had standardized his techniques. "The first thing he does," reported a Virginia newspaper somewhat in awe, "is to organize a national bank, and that is sometimes done before there is a single house on the site of the proposed town. Then he organizes various manufacturing establishments. Millions of dollars are spent in the briefest imaginable time; and woods and fields are transformed into thriving and prosperous cities."<sup>2</sup> Rice was credited with the creation of sixteen "cities." At Fort Payne his influence was paramount. He presided over the DeKalb Lumber Company, the \$250,000 Rice Investment Company, the \$50,000 First National Bank of Ft.

<sup>1</sup>Cardiff (Tennessee) *Herald* April 23, 1890; Chattanooga (Tennessee) *Times* October 2, 1890.

<sup>2</sup>Roanoke (Virginia) *Times* June 19, 1890.

Payne and the Bank of Fort Payne." The town was boosted by the Fort Payne *Herald* and promoted as "The Electric City" and as "The New England City of the South." The first Great Land Sale occurred in February 1889 with 531 lots sold.<sup>4</sup>

Fort Payne's fortunes were carefully watched by speculators in Virginia, Tennessee, and selected segments of Kentucky and Georgia. If Fort Payne prospered, they reasoned, similar city lots could be created from cheap farm acreages in their area. The Chattanooga *Times* declared that "the success of the new town, Fort Payne, has justified the assertion that more and better trade centers are needed in this part of the South. . . . There is no good reason why there should not grow up in this decade within the Chattanooga district, a dozen counterparts of Sheffield and Fort Payne."<sup>5</sup> Richard H. Edmonds of the industry-boosting Baltimore *Manufacturers' Record* proclaimed that "the thrill of industrial activity" that has been evidenced in Alabama "is to be felt in . . . Virginia, and especially the mineral sections."<sup>6</sup> Soon get rich quick fever was felt throughout the region. "From Roanoke, through Southwest Virginia, to Birmingham, Alabama, a wave of speculation is rolling, white capped with the dollars of the rich and poor. . . . Dazzling, bewildered excitement is everywhere. Where cannons boomed in the sixties dollars are rattling now. Towns are founded here with a rapidity and ease that is simply astounding."<sup>7</sup> The success of any one venture gave investors elsewhere confidence that land prices in their town could only rise.

That is the reason why the Chattanooga *Times* mentioned Fort Payne and Sheffield by name. The latter's land sale grossed \$104,000 the first day. Sheffield had been around since 1884 but sensing increased interest in iron and coal towns, the town fathers jumped on the land sale band wagon. According

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<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup>*Fort Payne Illustrated* (Fort Payne?, 1890) 37-42, 50; Knoxville (Tennessee) *Sentinel* February 3, 1890; Knoxville (Tennessee) *Journal* May 11, 1890; Chattanooga *Times* October 16, 1890. See also Chattanooga (Tennessee) *Times* May 31, October 22, 25, 1890.

<sup>5</sup>Chattanooga (Tennessee) *Times* May 8, 1890.

<sup>6</sup>Lynchburg (Virginia) *Virginian* July 25, 1889.

<sup>7</sup>Roanoke (Virginia) *Times* June 15, 1890 from the New York *Herald*.

to the 1890 census its population had reached 2,736.<sup>8</sup> Fort Payne's most serious Alabama rival was however, not Sheffield, but Piedmont. Two members of the Board of Directors were from Wilmington.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, promoters touted the town as "Delaware's Magic City of the South." Its location, boosters said, was at the very "center of the mineral region of Northern Alabama."<sup>10</sup> The streets were crowded for the February sale, and according to friendly sources, many who came "to scoff remain[ed] to invest." Speculative fever undid the doubters and the total for six days of sales in January plus two and a half in February amounted to \$400,000. This was the largest dollar amount to date and good enough for fifth during the period 1890-1893.<sup>11</sup> The company, sensing that interest in new towns was inversely proportional to the number of new towns on the market, decided that their May 21st sale would be by company schedule rather than through an auction. Public disclosure of declining land prices could have a disastrously deflationary impact and lead to panic selling.<sup>12</sup>

Two other Alabama promotions ran into six figures. Sylacauga, "The Marble and Iron City of Alabama," attracted a crowd described as "really tremendous." Within two hours \$162,000 worth of lots were auctioned off.<sup>13</sup> Nottingham, self-proclaimed as "Alabama's Young Napoleonic City" produced \$162,000, despite poor first day sales during which some lots went for as low as \$4 per front foot.<sup>14</sup>

Other attempts at creating industrial towns in Alabama were less successful. This was not for lack of energy or in some cases lack of verve or imagination. For instance, to promote

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<sup>8</sup>Chattanooga (Tennessee) *Times* April 2, May 8, 1890.

<sup>9</sup>Preston Lee and E. H. Gayley. Other directors were James Swann and Jonathan C. Calhoun of New York, W. W. Draper of Atlanta and W. G. Ledbetter from Anniston.

<sup>10</sup>Chattanooga (Tennessee) *Times* May 3, 1890; Roanoke (Virginia) *Times* February 2, 4, 1890; Knoxville (Tennessee) *Journal* February 1, 1890.

<sup>11</sup>Birmingham *Age-Herald* February 23, 1890.

<sup>12</sup>Knoxville (Tennessee) *Journal* May 14, 1890.

<sup>13</sup>Chattanooga (Tennessee) *Times* April 13, 1890; Knoxville (Tennessee) *Journal* April 23, 24, 1890; Knoxville (Tennessee) *Sentinel* April 16, 1890; Cardiff (Tennessee) *Herald* May 14, 1890. Located at the junction of the Louisville & Nashville and the Columbus & Western railroads.

<sup>14</sup>Middlesboro (Kentucky) *News* May 1, 1890; Cardiff (Tennessee) *Herald* May 1, 1890.

Bridgeport, the "Key of the Sequachee Valley," promoters hired Edward Hanlan and Fred Plaisted who were to race in their "keen bladed shells." The three scheduled boat races attracted great attention. At the end of two races each had one win. But the horrified promoters found that perhaps as much money was being spent betting on the boats as was expended on lots. On the first day only forty-six lots were sold at an average of \$500 per lot. The final tally was a meager \$44,000. The land sale was called off and the tie breaking race cancelled.<sup>15</sup> Later in the year the company was reorganized under the direction of New Yorkers.<sup>16</sup>

Some speculations predated 1890. One of the oldest was Florence, a creation of the Era of Good Feelings.<sup>17</sup> Jumping on the Great Land Sale band wagon late, the Florence Land Company's "Philadelphia of the Southern Country," sale was a success. Its solid growth persuaded investors to buy land here in November, a time by which most land sales were abject failures. The company claimed that the population had increased during the decade from 1250 to 6974. This was an honest figure when compared to the exaggerated figures boasted by other companies, but still it stretched the truth. The actual figures were 1359 and 6012, the difference of the differences being 1,071!<sup>18</sup>

Anniston, "The Model City of the Great South," was the scene of an early April "Mammoth Sale." According to its promoters "traveling expenses" would be "refunded to all parties making investments."<sup>19</sup> When the census takers finished their work it was found that Anniston registered a 961.4% population gain and missed by but two people reaching 10,000 population. Gadsden, whose first furnace was "blown in" dur-

<sup>15</sup>Chattanooga (Tennessee) *Times* April 6, May 7, 8, 1890.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, October 17, October 18, 1890. Frank J. Fitzpatrick "formerly connected with large lumber transactions in the South" was credited with this action. Officers were David Bonner, President; A. B. Claflin (Vice-President); E. A. Hoffman (Secretary); James A. Roberts (Treasurer) all of New York; Jesse Brown of Scottsboro (Second Vice-President).

<sup>17</sup>Stuart Seely Sprague, "Alabama Town Production During the Era of Good Feelings," *Alabama Historical Quarterly* Spring, 1974, 15-20.

<sup>18</sup>Birmingham *Age-Herald* October 20, 22, 1890; Chattanooga (Tennessee) *Times* November 17, 1890.

<sup>19</sup>Birmingham *Age-Herald* March 18, 1890; Knoxville (Tennessee) *Sentinel* March 18, 1890.



ing October 1888, was described as being "on the eve of the biggest boom she ever experienced."<sup>20</sup>

A minimum of nine other cities were advertised in 1890. Three of these, Shelby City, Attalla, and Bluffton, held their Great Land Sales in April. "The public is clamoring to get in," proclaimed the Shelby City Land Company, "The Cradle of Alabama Iron Making Will Blossom Like a Rose." To the unknowing, New England capital connoted conservative, safe investing. Consequently, the company emphasized the fact that the land was sold by a Selma man to a New England syndicate. Since the results of the sale were not publicized, it may be that the Alabama man got the best of the bargain.<sup>21</sup>

Attalla also prepared for an April sale. Backed by the *Attalla Herald*, *New Age*, *Pick and Shovel* and for three days the *Daily Enterprise*, The Attalla Iron and Steel Company promoted "The Model City of the South." Results were not reported in the *Chattanooga Times* nor the *Knoxville Journal*, usually an indication that prices were embarrassing low.<sup>22</sup> The last of the April sales was that of Bluffton. The company appears to have been more interested in mining iron ore and shipping the product to already established cities. Nevertheless, sensing the profitability of a land sale, the company held two, one on April 30th, the other in mid-October. We are "already shipping," the company declared, "our Bluffton brown ores to South Pittsburg, Tennessee, and to the Citico furnaces at Chattanooga." The officers of the company included three railroad men — two railroad presidents and the President of the Alabama State Railroad Commission. Bluffton's leaders claimed success in acquiring what many new towns attempted

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<sup>20</sup>Chattanooga (Tennessee) *Times* January 16, July 20, 1890.

<sup>21</sup>Birmingham *Age-Herald* March 21, 1890. The company was called the Alabama Coal & Iron Company with the following officers: Captain T. G. Bush of Mobile (President), Judge J. W. Lapsley (Treasurer), Colonel A. L. Tyler, Duncan T. Parker, Walter Crafts, A. S. Hewitt, Walter B. Gurnee, General Samuel Thomas, Lehman Bros. Directors.

<sup>22</sup>Winifred Gregory, *American Newspapers, 1821-1936* (New York, 1937); Chattanooga (Tennessee) *Times* May 12, 1890; Knoxville (Tennessee) *Journal* April 21, 1890.

to attract, but few succeeded, a college, the Methodist-Episcopal Church's University of the Southland.<sup>23</sup>

Five of the smaller sales — New Decatur, Pell City, Riverton, Tredegar, Stevenson — were held in May and one, New Rome, in October. But by May too many land sales had come and gone. Pell City is a case in point. One day's sale of seventy lots brought in only \$30,000. "The almost total loss of interest in auctions,"<sup>24</sup> was the stated reason for the dismal prices. New Decatur which three years earlier had been a 5,451 acre plantation was described as "The Modern Industrial City of the Great Tennessee Valley." The second day of its land sale grossed a disappointing \$57,000.<sup>25</sup> Riverton (formerly Chickasaw)<sup>26</sup> and Tredegar (twelve miles from Anniston)<sup>27</sup> attracted little attention. Despite an obviously flagging interest in land sales, promoters attempted to use the old magic, the incantations and Mumbo Jumbo. A thirty-two page prospectus was produced to promote New Rome. According to the company this firm "bears much the same relation . . . that the Elyton Land Company does to Birmingham."<sup>28</sup> Unfortunately for investors New Rome was not built in a day and was no Birmingham.

There was a tendency for some promoters and investors to move from speculation to speculation much as bees move in search of nectar. W. P. Rice followed up his Fort Payne with the Tennessee boom town of Cardiff. He sent W. L. Patterson

<sup>23</sup>Knoxville (Tennessee) *Journal* April 17, 1890; Chattanooga (Tennessee) *Times* April 13, October 8, 1890; Loudon (Tennessee) *Loudon County Record* March 27, 1890; Birmingham *Age-Herald* March 23, 1890. Officers: President S. J. Anderson (President of the Portland & Ogdensburg Rail Road), Vice-President Colonel Cary A. Wilson (President of the Brierfield, Blockton & Birmingham Rail Road), Vice-President Colonel Henry R. Shorter (President of the Alabama State Railroad Commission), Treasurer J. A. Flommerfelt (New York City jewelry manufacturer 177 Broadway).

<sup>24</sup>Chattanooga (Tennessee) *Times* April 16, 23-25, May 28-29, 1890.

<sup>25</sup>Knoxville (Tennessee) *Sentinel* April 25, 1890; Louisville (Kentucky) *Courier-Journal* May 4, 1890; Chattanooga (Tennessee) *Times* April 13, May 21, 1890.

<sup>26</sup>Chattanooga (Tennessee) *Times* May 11, 1890.

<sup>27</sup>Knoxville (Tennessee) *Sentinel* May 12, 1890; Knoxville (Tennessee) *Journal* May 14, 1890; Louisville (Kentucky) *Courier-Journal* May 20, 1890; Middlesboro (Kentucky) *News* May 29, 1890. On the E. T. R. R. and E. & W. R. R. President J. W. Burke.

<sup>28</sup>Chattanooga (Tennessee) *Times* September 28, October 12, 1890. Samuel H. Buck, President.

of Fort Payne's DeKalb House to manage Cardiff's hotel. The Stevenson Land and Improvement company was headed by J. C. Wall who had promoted Kimball, Tennessee and Fort Payne's J. G. Taylor was made General Manager. Fort Payne residents often bought land in other speculations, probably in part as a hedge. At the Bridgeport sale these included W. W. Haralson and W. E. Quinn; at Kensington, Georgia J. F. Douglass and W. Figert; at Kimball, Tennessee J. R. Shields, S. N. Shapley, S. W. Johnson, H. T. Pope, J. J. Conway, J. P. Majors, R. M. Morser, L. Lowenthal, B. H. Nicholson and Darling & Kent; at Pell City E. W. Goodfrey; at Rockwood, Tennessee A. W. DeWhit and W. J. Davis; at New England City, Georgia A. A. Galloway, J. D. Whittaker, W. J. Wilson, Peter S. Peon, M. D. Fuller, J. A. Wilder, O. R. Shields, Gauthier & Dowe, S. W. Dickey, A. N. Whittaker, W. J. Wilson, Peter S. Peon, M. D. Fuller, J. A. Wilder, O. R. Shields, Gauthier & Dowe, S. W. Dickey, A. N. Shopleigh, V. W. Rand, E. S. Crowden, E. J. Trout. Investors from Ft. Payne were even more numerous at the Cardiff, Tennessee sale. Evidence indicates that the practice of purchasing land in a number of boom towns was not limited to the people of Fort Payne, though this may be the most dramatic example.<sup>29</sup>

The high water mark of Appalachian booming was reached by April, 1890. The market became glutted. Selling pressure rose as buyers considered themselves "suckers." The demise of the seemingly sound speculation at Middlesborough, Kentucky, the Panic of 1893, the declining price for iron reinforced an already sharply downward plunge in such real estate. An era had ended. There was, on the other hand, a constructive side. The frenzied platting of new towns had drawn renewed attention to the iron resources of Alabama. The injection of outside capital not only aided the new towns, but also larger, established cities into whose economic orbit they fell.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, May 7, 9, October 15, June 11, 12, May 29, 14, April 16, 23, 24, 25, 1890.

<sup>30</sup>See Stuart Seely Sprague, "Investing in Appalachia: The Virginia Valley Boom of 1889-1893," *Virginia Cavalcade* Winter, 1975, 134-143 for details of the decline elsewhere.

## THE COLLAPSE OF BIRACIAL UNIONISM: THE ALABAMA COAL STRIKE OF 1908

by

Richard A. Straw

In July 1908 the United Mine Workers of America authorized the calling of a strike in Alabama because of the refusal of many large coal companies there to renew a wage agreement that had expired the year before. This strike was one in a series that befell Alabama between 1894 and 1920, and it was as devastating in its destruction of life and property as it was in its effects on the UMW in District 20.

The UMW first entered Alabama in 1893, only three years after the union was founded in Columbus, Ohio. When it was organized, unlike most other labor unions, the UMW erected no barriers against Negro membership; in fact, it actively sought to organize them mainly because of the northern operators' reliance upon blacks as strikebreakers and because of the competitive advantage their cheap labor gave to southern operators. A major objective of the UMW was to "unite in one organization, regardless of creed, color or nationality, all workmen employed in and around coal mines,"<sup>1</sup> and for a number of years the union employed one national and several district Negro organizers to facilitate the unionization of black miners. The official UMW's position towards black miners is significant not only because of its variance with the vast majority of labor organizations at the time (including the AFL, of which it was the largest union) but also because the UMW formulated its firm stand on the necessity of biracial unionism during a time when blacks were experiencing the rapid deterioration of their political, economic, and social status on a national level. The union's radical racial policy originated because of the UMW's role as an industrial rather than a craft union and because of the "evangelical egalitarianism" which characterized its leadership at the time. "Anti Negro diatribes," which were commonly seen in journals between 1890-1910, "were rare in the UMW publications despite the difficulty in organizing Negro

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<sup>1</sup>Article II, Constitution of the International Union, United Mine Workers of America, 1924 printing, 3.

miners fresh from rural areas and despite the use of Negro strikebreakers."<sup>2</sup>

Although there was considerable anti-union sentiment expressed by blacks in this century's first decade, Alabama's black miners exhibited a strong fidelity to unionism during the 1908 strike. "The failure of the UMW to gain a permanent foothold in Alabama was not due to the operators' use of an industrial army reserve which was frequently used to defeat the union's purpose in northern Appalachia, but rather to southern social prejudice."<sup>3</sup>

The period between 1890 and 1908 was a boom time for Alabama's coal country. Total coal production in 1908 was three times what it had been in 1890. In 1890 there were approximately 8,000 coal miners with 3,600 being Negroes. At the turn of the century the number of black miners had increased to 9,700 out of a total of just under 18,000.<sup>4</sup> During this period operators were hiring hundreds of unskilled black workers, realizing that if they kept the standard of living as low as possible, they could sell their coal for less than the unionized northern fields, thus enabling them to break into the lucrative Great Lakes market. The union pressed its struggle to organize all the miners in Alabama into one interracial union. By 1902 the UMW claimed that 65% of the miners in Alabama were organized, and one half of this number were Negroes. In 1904 the UMW called a strike because many large companies called for the open shop. The strike lasted for two years and the UMW invested a million dollars in the losing cause. Many of the operators who had not demanded the open shop in 1904 refused to renew their contracts in 1908; another crisis was upon the shoulders of the struggling miners of Alabama. During the two month strike of 1908, the UMW spent another \$400,000 in its effort to construct an interracial industrial un-

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<sup>2</sup>Herbert Gutman, "The Negro and the UMW" in Julius Jacobson (ed.) *The Negro in the American Labor Movement* (New York: Doubleday, 1968), 83.

<sup>3</sup>Sterling D. Spero and Abram L. Harris, *The Black Worker* (New York: Athenaeum, 1968) 357.

<sup>4</sup>Gutman, 70.



ion in Alabama.<sup>5</sup> By 1908 the leaders and rank and file of the UMW had achieved their goal of a strong biracial union, but it could not stand in the face of the racist and anti-union attitudes of the "New South."

In early June 1908 the 11th Annual Convention of the UMW in District 20 was called to order with fifty-eight delegates attending. The usual business of the convention was completed rapidly. J. F. Sorsby, a black miner, was elected district vice-president, and three members of the eight-man District Executive Board were Negroes.<sup>6</sup> The 1908 convention faced the usual task of arranging a wage scale to present to the operators, but this year the job was even more difficult. Most of the large commercial companies that had closed for repairs had announced their intention of re-opening with non-union labor unless the UMW dropped its wage demand by ten cents per ton. The final conference between miners and operators on July 2, 1908, resulted in a basic disagreement. The operators insisted on a ten cent cut in wages which would have reduced the wage per ton to 47½ cents. The UMW could not accept this. The operators argued that they could not compete with the non-union mines without reducing the miners' wages by at least ten cents.<sup>7</sup> These commercial companies, which employed around four thousand miners, threatened to sever all relations with the union unless the UMW reconsidered its position. The miners, after reconvening, offered a base scale of fifty-five cents per ton, but the operators refused.<sup>8</sup>

On July 6, 1908, because of the unwillingness of the commercial operators to offer the union miners a wage of 55 cents per ton the International Executive Board of the UMW authorized a strike in Alabama.<sup>9</sup> The operators indicated early that there was little hindrance of the mining process due to the strike, but the union claimed that operations at sixteen non-union mines were disrupted and that the union ranks had been increased by several thousand. The *Birmingham News* reported on Monday July 6 that many UMW locals, badly demoralized since the strike in 1904, took steps toward reorganization.

<sup>5</sup>Spero and Harris, p. 357; Gutman, 111.

<sup>6</sup>*Birmingham Labor Advocate*, June 12, 1908.

<sup>7</sup>*Birmingham News*, July 2, 1908.

<sup>8</sup>*Birmingham Labor Advocate*, July 10, 1908.

<sup>9</sup>*Birmingham News*, July 6, 1908.

The UMW also made every effort to gain the support of all the miners in the state, those employed by both the "captive" furnace mines and the commercial mines.

As the strike entered its second day the miners were confident that the UMW would offer financial aid to the thousands of men whom they anticipated would be unemployed as the strike spread. Those men who encouraged miners in all the coal mines of Alabama to lay down their picks were undoubtedly pleased when W. R. Fairley, Alabama's representative to the UMW International Executive Board, stated, "the national organization will take care of the men. We will be in a position to supply the needs of the striking miners and to wage the fight successfully."<sup>10</sup>

Throughout July and August the operators made numerous attempts to run their mines with the use of scab labor. To be sure, striking miners opposed the principle of the open-shop and responded to the illicit operation of the mines with either violence or the threat of violence. Throughout the district acts of violence were committed, either by striking miners or law enforcement officials, which resulted in both personal and property damage.

In what appeared to be an almost eager display of anticipation of violence between union and non-union miners, Sheriff John Higdon of Jefferson County began swearing in special deputies on the very first day of the strike. Being a special deputy during an industrial conflict was either a highly profitable job or one that offered unusual excitement because Higdon reported that his office had been deluged with letters from men all over the U.S. wanting to be sworn in as special deputies. The office reported, however, that long lines of local men had showed up to apply for the positions.<sup>11</sup>

There was a great deal of violence during the strike with most of it being directed at scab miners and trains carrying scabs, and the union officials engaged in a constant rhetorical battle with the sheriff over who was to blame. H. H. O'Neal, president of a UMW local at Republic, Alabama, called on

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, July 7, 1908.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, July 9, 1908.

Sheriff Higdon and assured him of UMW support in preserving order. O'Neal told the sheriff that any union miners detected in a violation of the law would be quickly turned over to the authorities.<sup>12</sup> Fairley stated in a newspaper interview that the UMW would not tolerate any violence from its members since he was aware the public would use this against the union.<sup>13</sup> The operators were not convinced, and acting according to certain lessons they had learned from the violent strike of 1904, they began hiring their own special guards to protect their mining camps.<sup>14</sup>

On July 15, Fairley issued a statement in which he severely criticized the actions of the more than 100 special deputies that Sheriff Higdon had sworn in to "preserve law and order." Fairley characterized the strike situation as a "reign of terror," and charged deputies and guards with arresting men without warrants. "They are breaking up meetings and taking our men by force to the company's office at Sayreton to force them to go to work." Fairley was convinced that "there had been no violation of the law by miners since the strike began" and that the violence on the part of the deputies and guards was perpetrated in order to instigate violence among the striking miners.<sup>15</sup>

As the strike passed into its second week the violence intensified, as did the steadfastness of the opposing parties. The union claimed it received large accessions to its ranks, while the operators stated that the furnace companies had lost only a few men and that there had been little interruption of their business. After one week of making a "supreme effort to organize the state" seven thousand miners were idle, many were homeless, and all were under the watchful glare of over one hundred heavily armed guards who patrolled the mining camps and surrounding territory. The UMW hastily constructed commissaries where food was doled out to hungry women and children while mass meetings and demonstrations were held daily by the striking coal diggers. At the Bessie mines, Joe Merrill, president of the UMW local there, stated that only a few men remained working and these were watched by forty heavily

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, July 11, 1908.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, July 10, 1908.

<sup>14</sup>Birmingham *Age-Herald*, July 8, 1908.

<sup>15</sup>Birmingham *News*, July 13, 1908; July 15, 1908.



armed guards. He claimed that the mines had "assumed a military appearance with nightly patrols and around the clock guarding."<sup>16</sup> By the beginning of the second week it was clear that more than a ten cent wage increase was at stake. The union was struggling for its very existence in Alabama, and the operators were fighting to crush it.

The amount of violence in the Birmingham area increased substantially around July 13. The furnace and coal operators, after a meeting Wednesday morning, July 15, issued a statement deploring the serious turn the strike situation had taken. The key to the violence lay in another statement issued by the operators. They claimed they were bringing large numbers of men into the district to replace the striking miners. They said that "labor agents had been unusually active in neighboring fields, and the companies would continue to pour outside labor into the district until output was again normal."<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately the evidence does not indicate whether these strike-breakers were black or white.

Although it is difficult to get any clear estimate of the number of black strikers, there seems to be a rather clear indication that the vast majority of those strikers arrested were black, and that the law enforcement officials, as well as the newspaper editors, viewed the existence of large numbers of "idle" Negroes as a serious and direct threat to the security of the law-abiding white population. On the morning of July 15 at Sayreton, Alabama, several special deputies arrested thirteen Negroes and a white man who were gathered in a woods near the mine with other striking miners. The deputies alleged that the men were "hooting" others who were going to work. Union officials denied this and claimed that the men were holding a peaceable meeting. During the arrest thirty or forty shots were fired, and two of the arrested Negroes were wounded. Following this incident some of the union officials swore out a warrant for the arrest of Special Deputy C. T. Huggins, charging him with assault with intent to murder. The deputy was arrested but released after bond was posted.<sup>18</sup> This was one of many incidents described in great detail by the two Birming-

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, July 14, 1908.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, July 15, 1908.

<sup>18</sup>*Birmingham Age-Herald*, July 16, 1908.

ham newspapers, and it indicates that there was at least some commitment from Higdon to control the actions of his forces. At Sayreton the next night everything was quiet as a result of speeches by Fairley and Higdon. The striking miners, apparently wanting to know the law so they could uphold it, listened in earnest to Sheriff Higdon's speech. In an obvious attempt to bolster the union's confidence in him, Higdon announced he had warrants for the arrest of fifteen special deputies — signed by union men — claiming that his only mission was to protect all against property and personal destruction.<sup>19</sup> But even with this show of faith by the sheriff, it seems clear that, considering their experiences, the striking miners were not consoled by his closing words: "Just so long as each of you conducts himself properly you have nothing to fear from the deputies. In fact you should feel that a deputy is just as much your friend as he is someone else's. His sole mission is to see that the law is not violated either by strikers or corporations."<sup>20</sup>

Although the union's bitterness about the violence that characterized the strike was generally directed toward the special deputies, Sheriff Higdon was occasionally the object of scorn. The *Labor Advocate*, the official journal of the Birmingham Trades Council, called him a "little czar" and an "anarchist," and it stated that in Jefferson county, "Negro pimps were picked up from the worst dives and given sheriffs badges."<sup>21</sup> Although black miners constituted a significant portion of union strength in Alabama, there was a tremendous amount of concern expressed by the union as to the possible employment of blacks as deputy sheriffs. The exact reasons for this apprehension are unclear, but it appears from the rhetoric that the white population as a whole, including the integrated UMW, was extremely fearful of having large numbers of armed Negroes in their midst. In an official statement issued from UMW headquarters in Birmingham on July 21, Fairley denied that there were large mobs of armed Negro strikers roaming the countryside and intimidating non-union miners. But he also said, "There is nothing said about Negro deputies being appointed by Sheriff Higdon, one of whom shot indiscriminately,

<sup>19</sup>Birmingham *News*, July 16, 1908.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup>Birmingham *Labor Advocate*, July 17, 1908.

endangering the lives of women and children at Pratt City last Friday." He continued, stating that, if Negroes were appointed to positions on the Birmingham police force, there would be a "full sized riot by the white citizens of Birmingham for the indignity heaped on them."<sup>22</sup>

Higdon denied ever having hired any Negro deputies. In a reply to Fairley's charge the sheriff remarked that he did employ several Negroes to care for the horses and that occasionally they would accompany deputies on official business. On July 25 Fairley again verbally attacked the Sheriff for his hiring practices. Having blacks accompany deputies on official business was, according to Fairley, worse than regularly commissioning a Negro. Fairley asserted that, "if the sheriff has armed Negroes running around loose without commissions, the citizens of the community, and especially the striking miners, are living in grave peril. If he is allowing these men to accompany deputies and act as officers, no man can measure the danger to the community."<sup>23</sup> It is puzzling that the biracial UMW would be so concerned that the sheriff employed Negroes. Perhaps Fairley was worried that the armed blacks would attack the white strikers. It is more logical though to assume that he was aware of the great differences of opinion among blacks about the value of labor unions and understood that there was very little racially based solidarity in the black community.

The miners' union had added over eight thousand new members since the beginning of the strike, and with the vast majority of local miners remaining loyal to the union the operators were forced to import scab labor. Since the operators were re-opening and threatening to re-open their mines with imported laborers the possibility of violence was imminent.

Strikers were reported patrolling highways, dynamiting houses, and intimidating non-union miners, and hundreds of union men were jailed, threatened, and mistreated by the special deputies. Throughout July and August almost daily occurrences of hootings, beatings, and small riots were reported. The most serious outbreaks of violence involved the attack by strikers on trains carrying imported labor to the strike area,

<sup>22</sup>Birmingham News, July 21, 1908.

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, July 25, 1908.

and the lynching of a Negro striker by a crowd led by two special deputies.<sup>24</sup>

In the early morning hours of July 16, a coachload of strikebreakers, bound for the Adamsville mine of the Birmingham Coal and Iron Company, was attacked at the small junction of Jefferson by perhaps three hundred men. The scabs were dragged from the train and chased down the track with the armed men in pursuit. According to one newspaper's report not a shot was fired by the seven guards on the train, but the windows were riddled with bullets and the special deputies were disarmed with guns at their heads. The next afternoon a far more serious outbreak occurred. Just as a trainload of strikebreakers approached the same junction, perhaps one thousand strikers and sympathizers opened fire on the train. The thirty deputies on board quickly exhausted their ammunition supply and with one of their group fatally wounded the train escaped through a tunnel in a mountain, while "volley after volley blazed forth from Winchester rifles: the hills on each side and the slope above the tunnel literally swarmed with armed men, constantly firing from behind rocks and trees."<sup>25</sup> After what was labeled, "a most exciting battle, which knows few equals in Alabama since the civil war,"<sup>26</sup> Governor Braxton Bragg Comer, an industrialist, and former lessee of convict labor, issued the following public statement: "... I am afraid the miners do not comprehend that the peace of the state must be preserved. I trust the difficulties will be settled without any serious results." Comer went on to say that he intended to do everything in his power, "without infringing on the rights of any citizen, to maintain the peace of the state."<sup>27</sup> In what appeared to be the first major public statement that placed the strike in racial terms, Major G. B. Seals of the Alabama National Guard described how an advance guard has discovered "the Negroes ambushed near an old mill." He stated that the blacks were, "just a sample of the opposition," and claimed that "very few white people" had anything to do with it. "The

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<sup>24</sup>Both the *Birmingham News* and *Age-Herald* carried daily stories of the shootings, bombings and beatings that occurred in the mining regions during July and August 1908.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, July 16, 1908; *Birmingham Age-Herald*, July 18, 1908.

<sup>26</sup>*Birmingham Age-Herald*, July 18, 1908.

<sup>27</sup>*Birmingham Age-Herald*, July 18, 1908.

Negroes are armed to the teeth, and seem to be directed by white men, although the Negroes are everywhere in predominance."<sup>28</sup>

Throughout the last days of July and the first weeks of August a "reign of terror" had indeed descended upon the mining region of Alabama. The killing of a non-union miner, the wounding of a non-union and a union miner, the burning of a non-union miner's home, a number of assaults upon non-union men, and the dynamiting of an air shaft, all occurred on Tuesday and Wednesday, July 28 and 29.<sup>29</sup> Early on the night of July 31 a group of black strikers gathered in a wooded area near Mine #1 at Pratt City. This mine was surrounded by a line of deputy sheriffs. Inside this line was a military line and inside this was the camp and mine. Although the majority of the group was dispersed by deputy sheriffs, some were able to slip past the guards and open fire on the camp. After a short skirmish they were repulsed. Later the next week two pitched battles were fought at Lewisburg, and about midnight on August 4 an attempt was made to blow up the stockade which housed the imported miners at that town.

Although several companies of Alabama National Guardsmen had been stationed in the area, with the approval of the UMW, more drastic law enforcement methods were required according to Frank Evans, special correspondent to the *Birmingham Age-Herald* and an almost daily commentator on the strike. Evans wrote, "There is a spirit of unrest manifested here. It is procured by the assemblies of striking miners who are listening to addresses by leaders imported from other points." To Evans these "gatherings and harsh utterances by the speakers caused anxiety and fear on the part of idle men who really desired to be at work in the mines." Evans was giving vent here to a feeling that characterized much of Birmingham's citizenry. He argued that the industrial work force in Alabama was basically satisfied, and that outside-enforced idleness, especially among the black miners, was the breeding ground of violence. Evans saw only one solution to this crisis: "not all the soldiers in Alabama nor every deputy sheriff can stop this disturbance and this devilment, unless they are given the authority to disperse assemblies of madmen and force them

<sup>28</sup>*Ibid.*, July 19, 1908.

<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, July 30, 1908.



to retirement in their homes or parts far away from these mines." He asserted time after time that an early adjustment to the strike was in the hands of the governor. "By signing his official signature he can establish martial law, and that is the remedy."<sup>30</sup>

This policy was in fact instituted by Governor Comer when he advised Sheriff Higdon to act according to a statement given the governor by S. D. Weakley, a former chief justice of the Alabama Supreme Court. Weakley wrote the governor that "any meeting calculated to excite alarm is an unlawful assembly and can be dispersed."<sup>31</sup> Comer ordered Higdon to allow no assemblies near mines, to permit no marching along public highways and to instruct his men to attend meetings and arrest incendiary speakers.

Comer's apparent concern for protecting life and property was not emulated by some other citizens of Alabama. On Monday evening August 3 the house of Findlay Fuller, a black non-union miner, was dynamited and completely destroyed. When Major Noble of the National Guard arrived at the house he questioned Fuller and determined that he had blown up his own house! Although Fuller was arrested and placed in jail he was soon out. His bail was paid by his employer. After allowing their bloodhounds to search the area, the sheriff arrested another Negro, Will Millin, a union miner, for the dynamiting. Millin, however, claimed he was "sitting up with a sick friend" when the explosion occurred. Millin was taken to the jail at Brighton Tuesday night August 4 just as a mass meeting of the white citizens of the town was breaking up in the same building, a meeting at which the outrage of the night before was severely condemned and a vigilance committee organized to keep down lawlessness. Upon returning to the jail in the morning the sheriff discovered Millin gone. Millin was found hanging from a nearby tree, his neck broken. After a short investigation two special deputies, R. B. and Lou Tyler, were arrested and charged with murder.<sup>32</sup> In those first two weeks of August there seemed to be no end to the horrible violence that had gripped the strike area.

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<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, August 3, 1908.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid.*, August 8, 1908.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, August 6, 1908.

Easy targets for retaliation were trains carrying scabs. On August 8 one conductor, one deputy sheriff, and one non-union miner were killed, two soldiers, four deputies, two non-union miners, and three officials of the Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Company were wounded, as a result of an attack on a special three car Louisville and Nashville train, in Bibb County. The train was carrying a large number of strike-breakers as well as a company of National Guardsmen and thirty deputy sheriffs. The train was traveling fast, and when it was just about a mile out of the village of Blocton, the engineer noticed a pile of cross ties on the tracks. As he slowed, approximately one hundred men opened fire on the train from behind the rocks twenty or thirty yards from the track. The arrests came swiftly. Early Monday morning thirteen blacks and fourteen Slavs were arrested for the murders. According to a reporter, "at one time things took on a squally look," but apparently a strong desire to reenact the tragedy of Brighton was suppressed.<sup>33</sup>

While the union pressed for recognition as the representative of Alabama's coal miners, the businessmen and public officials of Alabama were unable to understand the importance of this one fundamental element of industrialization. Arbitration of their grievances and recognition of the union were for a variety of reasons choices not open as possible ends to the conflict. Apparently force and intimidation were the only means to achieve industrial harmony according to the operators and politicians. Frank Evans advised the governor that the "anarchy and lawlessness must be stopped by force, full force." Although the Alabama militia was present in considerable numbers (there were over 1,000 in the strike zone by the middle of August), they were received warmly by the strikers. It was the deputy sheriffs, unskilled and undisciplined, that the miners despised. The Reverend W. A. Lewis opened an outdoor barbecue given the white union miners by the Alabama Farmers Union by telling the miners that the soldiers were the miners' friends and that the only "enemies the miners had were 'Higdon's dirty deputies.'" A large force of deputy sheriffs and soldiers were maintaining surveillance of the picnic, and when Lewis made his remarks about the deputies, chief deputy Lucien Brown arrested the minister. G. F. Howle,

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, August 9, 1908, August 10, 1908; *Birmingham News*, August 10, 1908.

editor of the *Birmingham Register*, was also arrested after telling of the lynching at Brighton, where no reward was offered to the public for information leading to the arrest and conviction of those guilty. He then referred to the recent slaying of a Negro prisoner as he was escaping from the courthouse. He exclaimed that the man was shot in the back while still handcuffed. "The men who did this shooting are still in the employ of the sheriff." Howle's arrest immediately followed.<sup>34</sup>

The harassment of both union and non-union miners continued through the last days of August, and by the end of that month it was obvious that the UMW could not sustain itself in the face of hostile government officials and public opinion. Frank Evans again offered a solution to the strike on August 4, 1908. The solution was to "rid the district of men who inflame passions." He analyzed the strike as being one where 4,000 union miners, fortified and encouraged by the UMW, were keeping 20,000 men who desired to work from doing so. But Evans was not totally anti-union. He felt that there were many miners who were loyal to the miners' cause because of the protection it afforded their families, but he was fearful of the effect the idleness was having on those of a "lower class." It must be remembered, he argued, "that the state of Alabama, through its penitentiary system, graduates from the coal mines every year large numbers of skilled miners — ex-convicts, white and black, who though they may have paid the penalty of their crimes, are still criminally intent."<sup>35</sup> Evans was convinced that this element was being aroused unnecessarily against the operators by the union organizers. These men were idled by the strike and their idleness bred a viciousness and madness that, according to Evans, paralyzed business and promoted social disorder. Evans' solution was a familiar one in southern history: expel the outsider since it is he, and not the social order or class structure, that is at fault.

This same sentiment was echoed by the leaders of the business establishment in Birmingham. At several meetings during the second week of August it was unanimously decided by local businessmen and merchants that the "leaders of the

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<sup>34</sup>*Birmingham Age-Herald*, August 21, 1908, August 23, 1908.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, August 4, 1908.



ignorant men must be made aware of their responsibility." Robert Jemison, a leader of Birmingham's business community, thought that the leaders of the strike who were "trying to keep men from working when they want to work should be ordered out of the state." The businessmen had an obvious financial interest in seeing the strike come to an end, and they were in agreement with Evans that force was the only solution. The sentiment among the businessmen was that if the governor was not going to declare martial law then it was the duty of the citizens to organize themselves to fight against the union leaders and the "revolution" that was gripping Alabama.<sup>36</sup>

The governor was persuaded by this and other displays of public sentiment. Comer had remained basically non-committal up to the middle of August, stating that he was only concerned with the protection of lives and the preservation of order. But on August 10, he issued an official proclamation that clearly indicated his intention to protect the rights of non-union miners in Alabama. He declared that the "whole powers of the state will be exerted for the protection of everybody who desires to work, even if it should be necessary to use all the military forces in the state for that purpose." Comer, too, was convinced that the work force in Alabama was merely attempting to go about the "peaceful prosecution of their labors" and that the UMW leaders imported into Alabama were responsible for all of the industrial discord in that state.<sup>37</sup> Ironically, on that same date John P. White, the international vice president of the UMW, arrived in Birmingham from Indianapolis to direct the strike situation.

White's strategy in directing the strike was to boost the morale of the miners, to attempt to keep other miners out of the area, and to seek arbitration as a solution to the strike. White knew that the only way the UMW could win recognition from the operators was to deny them a source of outside labor, and he placed an official circular in the *United Mine Workers Journal* in which he appealed to the members of organized labor everywhere to "stay away from Alabama until the present industrial struggle is over."<sup>38</sup> White also injected into the

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, August 10, 1908.

<sup>37</sup> B. B. Comer, "A Proclamation" in *Birmingham Age-Herald*, August 11, 1908.

<sup>38</sup> *United Mine Workers Journal*, (August 15, 1908) 1.

situation a degree of confidence that is essential to the success of any struggle. He explained to the miners of Alabama that if they could deny labor to the operators, they would be forced to recognize the union and provide a decent wage scale. White argued that "at no time in the history of Alabama mining has a strike ever manifested its effectiveness so completely than at present." He estimated that by the middle of August 1908 "nearly 18,000 men" were members of the UMW in District 20 and were "standing loyally by the cause."<sup>39</sup>

White also knew that if he could get the operators to the conference table to talk about their differences this would in fact be a rather strong concession by the operators to the principle of recognition. Responding to a petition which requested that the miners and operators arbitrate their differences, White and Fairley stated that they were "willing to submit to arbitration."<sup>40</sup>

But the representatives of Alabama's coal operators, the newly formed Alabama Coal Operators' Association, would have nothing to do with what they called a "Blood Stained Organization." In a statement issued in response to the petition asking for arbitration, the ACOA stated that the "United Mine Workers have but one demand — that we recognize the union and again bow to the tyranny of its leaders." The operators were adamant in their basic position that they would "never again permit the UMW leaders to control" their operations and they refused to have any "dealings with the United Mine Workers of America."<sup>41</sup>

The union was persistent in its efforts to secure a negotiated settlement to the strike. T. L. Lewis, president of the UMW, telegraphed G. B. McCormick, president of the ACOA, on August 24, asking for a conference with a view of ending the strike. Remaining true to their promise, the ACOA promptly denied the request. In his response to the union McCormick

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<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, (August 20, 1908) 1.

<sup>40</sup>Birmingham *Age-Herald*, August 19, 1908. There is some question as to the number of signatures that appeared on the petition calling for an arbitrated settlement of the strike. Fairley and White claimed that it held 20,000 while the Alabama Coal Operators' Association said it had only 600 signatures on it.

<sup>41</sup>"Statement of the Alabama Coal Operators Association," in Birmingham *Age-Herald*, August 19, 1908.

stated the commitment of the ACOA to the principles of the open-shop and strongly condemned the murders and violence allegedly committed by union miners.<sup>42</sup>

By the end of August, even though the union seemed to be holding its own with regard to preventing production at mines and the employment of scabs, the end of the strike was imminent. While the operators were being pushed harder and harder to fill orders for coal, the violence continued and the public outrage grew accordingly. By August 28 when Governor Comer summoned Lewis, White, J. R. Kennamer, president of District 20, and W. D. Ryan, national secretary-treasurer of the UMW, to a conference in Birmingham, he had decided to end the strike. Comer simply issued the union officers an ultimatum. The governor stated that if the strike was not ended very soon he would be forced to call a special session of the Alabama legislature to enact such laws that would enable him to deal with the strike. What the governor had in mind specifically was an amendment to the vagrancy law that would allow him to arrest every union miner out of work.<sup>43</sup> The union could not stand up under this pressure, so on Sunday August 30 an executive order was signed by Lewis, White, and Ryan which officially brought the strike to an end.<sup>44</sup>

The quick conclusion of the strike was related almost exclusively to the adroit use of racial prejudice of the operators to incur the wrath of public opinion against the UMW. By the middle of August the union was under severe attack from all sectors of Alabama society for promoting what was termed "social equality." The issue came to dominate much of the discussion surrounding the strike and it was an important part of the outrage and hysteria that prompted Comer to issue his ultimatum on August 28. The union came under attack from the operators frequently for its efforts "to force social equality between blacks and whites" in Alabama. Comer reported to the UMW officials at their August 28th conference that "members of the legislature in every sector of Alabama" were very

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<sup>42</sup>Birmingham *Age-Herald*, August 25, 1908.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, August 29, 1908; Twentieth Annual Conference of the United Mine Workers of America, *Proceedings* (1909), Vol. II, 865.

<sup>44</sup>Birmingham *Age-Herald*, August 31, 1908.

much "outraged at the attempts to establish social equality between white and black miners."<sup>45</sup>

Although the union was committed to a policy of not barring membership to individuals because of race or creed, it was quick to deny the charge of promoting social equality. G. C. McCormick of the ACOA received a telegram on the 25th of August from Lewis which stated that the union was not in favor of social equality. The UMW president declared that the miners' union was merely in favor of equal wages for equal work in of mines.<sup>46</sup>

Further defense of the union's position came in an editorial in the *Labor Advocate*. The editors give an insight into the private, as well as the official, attitude of the union toward the organization of black miners. The UMW organized blacks in Alabama for purposes of self-defense, since the union knew that if it did not, the operators would use them as strike-breakers and to keep down the wages of white miners. Therefore, the white miners were "forced to take blacks into the organization for self-protection." Arguing that the union in no way fostered social equality, the *Advocate* stated that the white miners "associate with blacks in the mines because the operators force them to do so . . . and outside of the mines upon all matters pertaining to their work and organization, and nothing more." The union's position was emphasized by the statement that "there is not at present and never was and can never be social equality between the whites and blacks in this state."<sup>47</sup> The miners knew that they differed very little in their basic prejudices from the operators and government officials, but they also knew that the operators would use the issue of social equality as one more weapon against an already unpopular union in their fight to destroy it.

As the violence increased and more men were idled by the strike, the populace became more concerned with the racial implications of the industrial struggle. Idleness among striking Negro miners was of great concern. Frank Evans, the columnist for the *Age-Herald*, grew steadily more distressed

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<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, August 25, 1908; August 29, 1908.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, August 26, 1908.

<sup>47</sup>Birmingham *Labor Advocate*, August 28, 1908.

over the numbers of idle blacks who congregated in the small mining towns around Birmingham. "Idleness" he wrote, "always begets crime and leads to unhappiness and misery." He went on to associate this idleness with a "criminal assault by Negroes upon white women in two of the strike districts."<sup>48</sup>

The importance of the biracial nature of the UMW, and the fear that it engendered in the hearts of white Alabamians, surfaced dramatically on August 8. Evans attended a miners assembly of about five hundred persons, both white and black, at Dora, Alabama, and was there struck with the "racial danger" inherent in the strike. He wrote:

It was left for a Negro preacher from Empire to take the stand and give utterance to remarks that cannot prove conducive to a readjustment of conditions and resumption of peace and order. It is a lamentable condition that incites and permits ignorant Negro leaders to address assemblies of white women and children as social equals advising as to moral and social questions and alluding to those delicate matters of social status which can only be discussed properly with fair women in the private home and by husband and father. It was a third of a century ago that the people of Alabama by rigid force and even the shedding of blood stopped the advance of a threatening peril which endangered our social fabric. It was the inculcation in the minds of blacks of the idea of social equality. The terrible poison then was sought to be applied for political purposes by the carpetbaggers from the North, and for a time the cloud seemed ominous, but the Caucasian blood of this state was aroused to resentment and to the defense of the home fireside. When today this correspondent saw the comingling of white and black at Dora, where he beheld the sympathetic arms of a Negro extended toward and embrace a white speaker to impart to him a secret of his bosom, in the very presence of gentle white women and innocent little children I thought to myself: has it again come to this?<sup>49</sup>

Indeed it had in the minds of most of the observers and partici-

<sup>48</sup>Birmingham *Age-Herald*, August 7, 1908.

<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, August 8, 1908.



pants in Birmingham during August 1908. "This is a white man's country, and there will be no nigger domination here,"<sup>50</sup> the sheriff of one Alabama county said to a meeting of miners. The union was convinced that statements such as this proved that "insatiate capital" was using the blacks to "make slaves of the whites."<sup>51</sup>

The citizens of Birmingham were formulating opinions about the union officials which were based on a set of very old attitudes about southern race relations. In contrast to the situation in Springfield, Illinois, during the summer of 1908, where a violent race riot had occurred, the cry in the South was not to kill Negroes, but to run out of the territory the white men who were upsetting the racial harmony that supposedly existed in Alabama. One Birmingham businessman wrote about Vice President White: "Why should we permit him to come into our county and organize the Negroes against the white people of the district, and destroy the good feeling that has existed. Do we want a 'Springfield riot' in our midst, started by this carpetbagger? It is time to show these insolent violaters of the peace and dignity of our state that Alabama is no place for them."<sup>52</sup>

There was a great fear among whites in Alabama that the promotion of social equality by the UMW would eventually lead to even greater discord than was present during the strike. Evans wrote that "no reasonable man, white or black, can doubt for a moment that the Negro is a valuable asset of these southern states. As a race they are useful, productive, and when exempt from the false teachings and domineering influences of bad white men they are always in a happy condition, so long as the social line is strictly drawn between whites and blacks." But in the eyes of Evans and the operators the union leaders were attempting "every day to obliterate this line."<sup>53</sup>

Evans took advantage of a speech given by Booker T. Washington in the northeast again to blast the racial policies of the UMW. Evans criticized Washington for addressing a

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<sup>50</sup>*UMW Journal*, (August 15, 1908).

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>52</sup>Letter, G. H. Estes to Editor, *Birmingham Age-Herald*, August 21, 1908.

<sup>53</sup>*Birmingham Age-Herald*, August 22, 1908.

northern audience when "this is the place where the voice of Booker T. Washington should be applied before his race in vigorous manner." He again emphasized that idleness, imposed by the strike, had made "bombthrowers, midnight assassins, cut-throats, and murderers out of members of Booker T. Washington's race."<sup>54</sup>

One of the most scathing attacks upon the union and its leaders came from a citizen of southern Alabama who wrote a letter to the *Birmingham Age-Herald* while visiting that city. J. V. Allen exclaimed that if "Fairley and his black co-conspirators would have invaded southern Alabama and perpetrated the same damnable deeds he has inflicted on the people of Jefferson County, nothing further would be needed but the coronor." He too used the race issue to arouse sentiments against the union when he claimed that the UMW officials were "guilty of efforts to overthrow" the area's social structure and "break down barriers sacred to the whole South."<sup>55</sup>

More vitriolic assessments of Fairley and the union came from two other citizens of Alabama. Walter Moore and Guy Johnson proclaimed that social equality had been established and sacred traditions trampled in the dust by the union's effort. They argued that "under Fairley's leadership it seemed the limit had been reached. Foreign agitators it is unclear here whether they referred to northern organizers or to Fairley, who was born in Great Britain not content are now organizing white women and black women into unions called Women's Auxiliaries." They ask rhetorically, "just how much damage to life, property and morals does this agitator Fairley and his associates have a right to inflict on this community before the deadline is reached." It was apparent to these two defenders of southern tradition that the citizens of Birmingham were "short on law or manhood, if not both."<sup>56</sup>

One of the most interesting statements of this virulently anti-union sentiment came in a newspaper column entitled "What the Women Think of It" written by Dolly Dalrymple. The attitudes expressed and the personal biography seem so pat

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, August 25, 1908.

<sup>55</sup>Letter, J. V. Allen to Editor, *Birmingham Age-Herald*, August 26, 1908.

<sup>56</sup>Letter, Walter Moore and G. R. Johnson to Editor, *Birmingham Age-Herald*, August 24, 1908.

and contrived as to raise questions about its authenticity. To her it seemed "absolutely inconceivable that any man, or association of men, should deliberately set about to upset the primary social laws of our beloved South." She shuddered and was saddened by the fact that anyone could suggest that such a thing as "social equality be tolerated or even countenanced." In a conversation with an operator Dalrymple claimed she commented upon the situation, and stated she could not believe the horrors perpetrated by the union. Whereupon she was told by the operator that "in one camp on a small tract of land there were several hundred men, women and children, white and black and that this camp was one of several, where equally bad conditions" existed.<sup>57</sup>

How bad these conditions were depended upon your viewpoint, and your attitude about the union. In perhaps his most prejudicial act of the whole strike, Governor Comer, on August 26, 1908, issued orders to the military authorities to cut down the tents of the striking miners and "not allow the establishment of more tented camps by coal miners." According to press releases this action was taken by the governor for "the preservation of public health." But Comer did not hesitate to reveal his real motives in a meeting with Kennamer the night before he issued the orders. Kennamer "located the governor at seven o'clock at night" and asked him if he intended to issue orders to cut down the miners' tents. Comer replied that he had. Kennamer then requested a conference on the matter before the governor's order was implemented, but Comer would not agree, stating, "You know what it means to have eight or nine thousand niggers idle in the state of Alabama, and I am not going to stand for it."<sup>58</sup> In an attempt to thwart the governor's severe action, President Lewis told the governor that the union would "transport out of the state every Negro who was on strike and make it a white man's strike." But Comer would not budge from his decision, and declared that he would not even permit "white men to live in tents or in camps in Alabama" under the UMW's jurisdiction.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup>Birmingham *Age-Herald*, August 30, 1908.

<sup>58</sup>UMW *Proceedings*, Vol. II, 865.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, 866. Comer's firm stand on the tent issue can be attributed to his anti-unionism certainly, but he was also being consistent about health, which was a grave concern at this time in Alabama.



The UMW responded to these attacks in various ways, but none proved fruitful. The skillful use of racial prejudice by the operators completely alienated the union and its members from Birmingham society, and made any kind of victory impossible. A master of understatement, Fairley declared in Indianapolis on August 28, that some prejudice against the miners' officers had been aroused in Alabama. He felt the miners' cause had been seriously damaged by the charges of social equality leveled at the union, but he explained that the union had been organizing black miners who had been brought into the district to replace strikers only as a measure of union self-preservation. But he knew that even this had prejudiced the miners' cause in the minds of the people of Alabama.<sup>60</sup>

By the end of August the operators and the Birmingham press had successfully shifted the emphasis of the strike. The union was no longer dealing with an industrial question, but with a racial problem. Union Vice President White recalled that "one evening a committee of Birmingham citizens waited for me and informed me that I had better call the strike off." He told them he "had no power to declare the strike off," and if he had he "would not do it." The committee argued that "no matter how much merit there may be in the miners' cause you cannot change the opinion of the people in this country that you are violating one of the principles the South holds near and dear." Then threatening White, the citizens declared that before they would "allow this to be done" they would "make Springfield, Illinois look like six cents."<sup>61</sup>

"That old race antagonism" so clearly defined by this committee of citizens was "the one great feature of this strike and one of the main things that caused its dissolution." According to White, the situation in Birmingham was so tense that "a small boy could have started a riot in the streets that would have caused countless numbers of innocent people to lose their lives." White felt that the use of the racial issue was resorted to by the operators only "when they saw that the UMW had completely tied up the industrial situation in that country." They then "went to the old closet and brought out the ghastly

<sup>60</sup>Birmingham Age-Herald, August 28, 1908.

<sup>61</sup>UMW Proceedings, Vol. II, 873.

spectre of racial hatred and held it before the people of Alabama."<sup>62</sup>

So effectively was the "ghastly spectre" used that as a result of the strike the UMW's strength in Alabama was reduced from approximately 18,000 to 700. President Kennamer of District 20 reported at the UMW Convention in 1909 that out of the 20,000 or so miners in Alabama who were sympathetic to the union's cause, only about 700 paid dues to the organization. He explained that the reason why they did not have more members was "because they are discharged whenever the operators find they are paying dues." Of the coal miners in Alabama a year after the strike, approximately 65 to 70% of them were Negroes, and in his address to the convention Kennamer praised the black miners for their loyalty and bravery, proclaiming that "there are no better strikers in the history of the UMW" than the black miners of Alabama.<sup>63</sup>

Three weeks after the strike began Fairley addressed a mass meeting of miners in Birmingham at which time he dwelt long on the importance to the miners of the outcome of the present strike. "The destiny of labor in the South," he said, "depends upon whether victory or defeat shall crown us at the close of our fight."<sup>64</sup> Fairley was uncannily accurate in his prediction. The UMW did not attempt any widespread organization in Alabama for a decade. The fears and hatreds displayed in this strike and others in the late 19th and early 20th century South were major factors in checking the growth of unionism in the region.

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<sup>62</sup>*Ibid.*, 871-872.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, 863.

<sup>64</sup>*Birmingham Age-Herald*, July 30, 1908.

TO UPLIFT A STATE AND NATION: THE FORMATIVE  
YEARS OF THE ALABAMA LEAGUE OF  
WOMEN VOTERS, 1920-1921

by

Mary E. Swenson

As the women's suffrage movement neared its end in 1918, those who had participated in the struggle realized that women working together in a nonpartisan organization could contribute to the success of democracy. The organization could lay the foundations for a politically educated voting population and devote its work to the passage of reforms for all people, "The League of Women Voters was founded upon that idea."<sup>1</sup>

The long, hard fight to achieve suffrage for women began in 1848 when Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucretia Mott and others met in Seneca Falls, New York and drew up a protest entitled the "Declaration of Sentiments." It was the first public protest against women's political, economic, and social inferiority.<sup>2</sup> The demand for suffrage quickly became the central issue in the women's rights movement.

The founders of the women's rights movement were all abolitionists, although not all abolitionists were for women's rights. Many felt that a crusade for woman suffrage would only hurt the fight for the abolition of Negro slavery.<sup>3</sup> The passage of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments after the Civil War caused those in the women's rights movement to expect Republican leaders to reward them with enfranchisement for their work; but when the Fifteenth Amendment was ratified in 1870, there was no mention in it of women.

Some states, especially those in the West, passed laws that provided for either partial or full suffrage for women. Between 1865 and 1900 there was a rapid change in American society and in the life style of the people, particularly women. In-

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<sup>1</sup>*Forty Years of a Great Idea*, The League of Women Voters, (n. p., 1960), 3.

<sup>2</sup>Aileen S. Kraditor, *The Ideas of The Woman Suffrage Movement 1890-1920* (New York: Anchor Books, Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1971), 1.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*

dustrialization and the advent of labor-saving devices provided more leisure time which was utilized by many women in the middle and upper classes for Progressive reform work. By 1890, one of the foremost reform issues centered on the fight for woman suffrage. The pioneers of the 1840's were replaced by a vigorous new group that was more conservative and systematic in their ideology and organization.<sup>4</sup> The first advocates of the vote for women had argued that suffrage was the natural right of all people, and therefore, women should be the political equal of men. By the 1890's, however, many men were questioning the belief in political equality for all, especially the immigrants and the Negro. The suffragists, who were often the counterparts of these men, tended to ignore the natural rights ideology and emphasized expediency as a means of Progressive reform. The new argument shifted from what benefits women could get from the vote, to what women could do for government and their communities; it moved from a reform to a means to reform.<sup>5</sup>

The year 1890 also marked the beginning of the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA) and the entrance of the woman's suffrage movement into the South. "The Southern suffragist movement was a white woman's movement, and the participation of Southern individuals and organizations in the NAWSA signified a permanent break with the abolition tradition from which the women's rights agitation had sprung."<sup>6</sup> But those for and against suffrage used race as their main argument. While the anti-suffragists called it the most dangerous blow aimed at white supremacy, suffragists cried out at the injustice of refined white women being the political inferiors of former slaves.<sup>7</sup> An increase in the number of intelligent voters would ensure white supremacy, not injure it.

At its 1903 convention the NAWSA adopted the principle

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<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, x.

<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, x.

<sup>7</sup>Alabama Democrats on Behalf and in Defense of The Large Unorganized Majority of Women of Alabama, *A Protest Against Women's Suffrage in Alabama*, pamphlet, n. p., n. d., in the possession of Dr. Allen W. Jones, Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama, 3; Kraditor, *The Woman Suffrage Movement*, 138.

of states rights as the basis of relationship of state suffrage organizations to one another and to national organization. This meant the states could set their own membership qualifications and use whatever tactics and arguments they felt would work best in their territory.<sup>8</sup> In 1919, when a fight broke out in the South between the advocates of a federal amendment and those who wanted suffrage by state amendment, most of the Southern members of the NAWSA stayed with the Association. The women believed that the state legislatures, by refusing to pass a state amendment to put before the people, had taken upon themselves the sole right to decide the question, and this was undemocratic.

The myth of Southern womanhood made the fight for the vote in the South the hardest of all. "The South had adopted a more rigid definition of the role of women than any other part of the country and had elevated that definition to the position of a myth." Womens' virtues were to include beauty, gentleness, modesty, domesticity, moral superiority and submission to the doctrine of male superiority and authority. The road to suffrage was often a devious one; "it was only after apprenticeship in such outwardly safe organizations as church societies and the Women's Christian Temperance Union that they began to venture into the women's clubs and suffrage associations."<sup>9</sup> For many Southern women a federal amendment was the only way to alter their traditional place in Southern life. It symbolized a grant of freedom and a greater degree of independence.<sup>10</sup>

The first Alabama suffrage club began in Decatur in 1892, with seven members. The opposition was so great that it only distributed literature and presented arguments in the press.<sup>11</sup> By 1902 there were only two clubs, Huntsville and Decatur, associated with the NAWSA. The clubs' lobbying efforts at the state constitutional convention were a dismal failure; women received no concessions and the husbands of

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<sup>8</sup>Kraditor, *The Woman Suffrage Movement*, 139.

<sup>9</sup>Anne Firor Scott, "After Suffrage: Southern Women in the Twenties," *Journal of Southern History* XXX (August, 1964) 299-301.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 298.

<sup>11</sup>Elizabeth C. Stanton, et. al., ed., *The History of Woman Suffrage, 1848-1920*, (Rochester, New York: Hollenbeck Press, 1902; reprint ed., New York: Arno & The New York Times, 1969), IV, 465-466.



tax-payers had the right to vote upon their wives' property. Suffrage work in Alabama ended soon after the convention and was not revived until March 29, 1910, when the Selma Suffrage Association was organized.<sup>12</sup> The Equal Suffrage League of Birmingham, established in 1911, was an outgrowth of the Progressive proposal for the abolition of child labor.<sup>13</sup> A year later the two groups formed one state organization for all suffrage work: The Alabama Equal Suffrage Association (AESA) which affiliated at once with the NAWSA.<sup>14</sup>

In January, 1915 the first resolution for a suffrage amendment to the state constitution was introduced in the state legislature, and it was quickly referred to the Committee on Privileges and Elections in the House. Following an adjournment, the resolution was postponed indefinitely. A hearing was finally granted and a vote was called late in the session. Although the final count was fifty-two to forty-three in favor of the resolution, it was defeated because of a lack of a three-fifths majority. Since the legislature met only once in four years, this was the only action taken on a state amendment.<sup>15</sup>

By 1917 eighty-one local suffrage clubs were represented at the state convention of the AESA in Birmingham, and a bi-weekly press bulletin began publication. When it became apparent that a federal amendment would pass the Congress in time to be sent to the state legislature in 1919, the women in Alabama began their campaign in earnest. At the same time, Mrs. James S. Pinckard founded the Southern Women's Anti-Ratification League in her Montgomery home.<sup>16</sup> President Woodrow Wilson telegraphed Governor Thomas E. Kilby on July 12, and asked him to ratify the amendment. On July 17, the Alabama Senate defeated it thirteen to nineteen and the House defeated it thirty-one to sixty two months later.<sup>17</sup> The final defeat occurred on September 22, 1919, when a Senate Joint Resolution, which stated the proposed amendment was "rejected by the Legislature of the State of Alabama," was

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<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, VI, 1-2.

<sup>13</sup>Lee N. Allen, "The Woman Suffrage Movement in Alabama, 1910-1920," *Alabama Review* XI (April, 1958), 85.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>15</sup>Stanton, et. al., *History of Woman Suffrage*, IV, 4.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 5-7.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 8.

adopted by both houses.<sup>18</sup> While the Anti-Ratification League was jubilant, the suffragists refused to abandon their hard work.

In the meantime the national leaders of the NAWSA, feeling very optimistic in 1917, began to lay the groundwork for the day when woman suffrage became a reality. Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt, President of the NAWSA, outlined a plan at the national convention that would unite the women of the equal suffrage states in a central body, the League of Women Voters (LWV). Upon the enfranchisement of its women each state would automatically join the organization, which would provide a way to retain a suffrage association for work on the federal amendment.<sup>19</sup>

The LWV was officially organized in St. Louis on March 29, 1919<sup>20</sup> at the NAWSA's 50th, or Jubilee, Convention and the 50th anniversary of the first grant of suffrage on equal terms with men in the world, which occurred at the organization of the Wyoming Territory. In an address to the convention on March 24, Catt asked that a nonpartisan and nonsectarian policy be adopted "to make our democracy so safe for the nation and so safe for the world that every citizen may feel secure and great men will acknowledge the worthiness of the American republic to lead."<sup>21</sup> The LWV also adopted ten points in Catt's address as the first aims of the League and the plan of work for the Committee on American Citizenship:

1. Compulsory education in every state for all children between six and sixteen during nine months of the year.
2. Education of adults by extension classes of the public schools.
3. English made the national language by having it compulsory in all public and private schools where courses in general education are conducted.
4. Higher qualifications for citizenship and more sympathetic and impressive ceremonies for naturalization.
5. Direct citi-

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<sup>18</sup>*General Laws of the Legislature of Alabama, 1919* (Montgomery, Alabama: Brown Printing Co., 1919), 556-557. The Alabama legislature ratified the Nineteenth Amendment thirty-three years later. *Montgomery Advertiser*, September 9, 1953.

<sup>19</sup>Stanton, et. al., *History of Woman Suffrage*, V, 683.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, 684.

zenship for women, not through marriage, as a qualification to vote. 6. Naturalization for married women to be made possible. 7. Compulsory publication in foreign language newspapers of lessons in citizenship. 8. Schools of citizenship in conjunction with the public schools, a certificate from such schools to be a qualification for naturalization and vote. 9. An oath of allegiance to the United States to be one qualification for the vote for every citizen native and foreign born. 10. An educational qualification for the vote in all states after a definite date to be determined.<sup>22</sup>

The LWV adopted a resolution to support the Federal Trade Commission in its efforts to secure remedial legislation in the meat-packing industry, and it endorsed the principle of federal aid to the states for the removal of adult illiteracy and for the Americanization of the adult foreign born.<sup>23</sup>

Firmly believing that suffrage was only a few days away, the "Victory Convention" of the NAWSA was held in Chicago simultaneously with the First Congress of the LWV, February 12-18, 1920. Catt, elected the first President of the LWV, declared that the purpose of the League was "... that of bringing about cooperation among women in the effective use of this supreme power for the highest welfare of the State."<sup>24</sup> A nation-wide program to establish citizenship schools in each county in the United States was urged. Deputations of the Board of Directors attended all of the national political parties' conventions except the Socialist party, which held its convention before the planks were sent out. The Prohibition Party adopted the full program of the LWV, while the Democratic Party incorporated twelve of the fifteen proposals and the Republican Party endorsed five.<sup>25</sup>

The advent of the vote did not unite suffragists as the national leaders hoped it would. A heated debate began over the nonpartisan policy of the LWV, and for a time it was feared the LWV would have to disband because of internal dissention caused by party politics. In March, 1920 Catt said the LWV

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup>*Ibid.*, 687.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, 541.

<sup>25</sup>*Ibid.*, 700-701; William H. Chafe, *The American Woman* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 27.



was an experiment. "There is no organization among men to compare with it or to give it precedent. It will be a plain test of the quality of women's character and intelligence as to whether it can be done or not."<sup>26</sup> Yet, she insisted that "the only way to get things done is to get them done on the inside of a political party."<sup>27</sup> There was also a faction within the LWV that wanted it to become an independent political party. The idea of a third party based on sex frightened national leaders. In New York, Governor Nathan L. Miller and the Republican party leaders openly opposed the membership of Republican women in the LWV. The two national parties, they claimed, were the only legitimate sources of political power, and the LWV drew women away from constructive party work.<sup>28</sup> A compromise was finally reached late in 1920. The LWV was determined "to mobilize public opinion behind reform programs and to instruct women in the tasks of citizenship so that they could work more effectively within existing political organizations."<sup>29</sup>

The same confidence that permeated the NAWSA took hold in the AESA. Two months after the LWV national convention the Alabama League of Women Voters (ALWV) was organized, and at the same time the Suffrage Association ended.<sup>30</sup> The women present at the state meeting held April 7-8, 1920 in Montgomery, felt the Nineteenth Amendment would be passed within two weeks and it was time to begin the work of educating all women in the duties of citizenship.

For the first time in history, on April 8 at the state meeting, women received political addresses from candidates in the spring Democratic primaries. Originally, eight candidates for the state Senate and the United States Senate were scheduled to speak, but only three men addressed the meeting.<sup>31</sup> Oscar W.

<sup>26</sup>Montgomery *Journal*, March 6, 1920.

<sup>27</sup>Chafe, *The American Woman*, 34.

<sup>28</sup>"The Future of the League of Women Voters," *New Republic* XXV (9 February 1921), 302.

<sup>29</sup>Chafe, *The American Woman*, 35.

<sup>30</sup>The last meeting of the AESA was held the night of April 7 and the morning of April 8. The AESA was then transferred into the ALWV at sessions during the morning and evening of April 8. *Montgomery Journal*, April 7, 1920. 1.

<sup>31</sup>Birmingham *Age-Herald*, March 28, 1920; April 1, 1920. J. Thomas Heflin and John W. Abercrombie, both running for a short term in the United States Senate, spoke, as did Judge Samuel Weakly, aspirant for the House seat of Oscar W. Underwood. *Montgomery Journal*, April 9, 1920.

Underwood, a Congressman and one of the candidates for the Senate, wrote a letter of apology to the ALWV explaining that out-of-state business prevented his attendance at the meeting. One of the ALWV officers, Mrs Solon (Pattie Ruffner) Jacobs, declared Underwood was in Montgomery, and that, if this represented the attitude of the political leaders in Alabama, the ALWV would do their utmost to change it.<sup>32</sup>

Judge John C. Anderson, Chief Justice of the Alabama Supreme Court, in one of the meeting's main addresses assured the women they would have all the rights of male voters when the federal amendment was passed. Anderson, reflecting the fears of many Alabamians, also said that "supremacy of the white race will not be affected by the passing of the amendment, but that the same restrictions would be placed on the incompetent class that has [*sic*] always stood in this state."<sup>33</sup>

Most of the activities of the first state ALWV meeting centered around the organizational structure of the League, its purpose, and its constitution and by-laws. Mrs. Arthur J. Bowron of Birmingham was elected State Chairman. The remaining state officers were: Mrs. Bibb Graves, Montgomery, first vice-chairman; Mrs. Joseph G. Wilkins, Selma, second vice-chairman; Miss Amelia Worthington, Birmingham, recording secretary; Miss Luna E. Davie, Montgomery, publicity secretary; and Miss Annie Joe Coates, Gadsden, treasurer.<sup>34</sup> There was a director for each of the nine Congressional districts, who, along with the officers and chairmen of the standing committees, constituted the ALWV Executive Committee. All issues and reforms supported by the ALWV had to pass the Executive Committee.

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<sup>32</sup>Montgomery *Journal*, April 9, 1920.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup>Mrs. Joseph G. (Hattie Hooker) Wilkins was the first woman elected to the Alabama legislature. She was the only successful candidate of three in the primary of 1922, and had been a charter member of the Selma Suffrage Association. *Alabama Official and Statistical Register*, 1923 (Montgomery, Alabama: Brown Printing Co., 1923), 135. Miss Amelia Worthington, later Mrs. Brenton Fisk, was the daughter of Thomas Worthington of Birmingham and the granddaughter of Commodore Nicholas Biddle of Philadelphia. Newspaper clipping, n. p., n. d., Worthington folder, Newspaper Clipping File, Alabama State Department of Archives and History, Montgomery, Alabama. Birmingham *Age-Herald*, April 10, 1920.

Membership in the ALWV was classified in three ways: individual members, county leagues, and affiliated organizations.<sup>35</sup> Any woman who had the right of franchise, paid an annual dues of one dollar, and was approved by the membership committee could be a member. The organization of the ALWV was divided into Congressional and county districts and their sub-divisions, according to the state legislative divisions in Alabama.<sup>36</sup>

The ten standing committees of the ALWV represented the types of reform that concerned many Progressives, especially women: American citizenship, protection of women in industry, child welfare, improvement of election laws and methods, social hygiene, unification of laws, supply and demand, research, legislative, and membership. Article Six of the ALWV by-laws provided that the Legislative Committee "shall organize a Legislative Council composed of all women's organizations in the state."<sup>37</sup> Its main purpose was to act in cooperation with each other in matters of general interest to women and in special remedial measures for the state. The Council would endorse only legislation as such, and would not endorse officials or men as individuals.<sup>38</sup>

The ALWV voted to adopt the resolutions passed by the LWV at the National Convention in February, 1920. The League of Nations received the total support of the ALWV, as did the following: universal compulsory physical training in the public schools in the state; raising the age of consent to marry from fourteen to eighteen; an increase in teacher's salaries; abolition of the death sentence; an eight-hour day and a forty-eight-hour week for women in all work; and full opportunities for the education of women along industrial lines.<sup>39</sup>

Education and improved legislation were the key factors in the formation of the ALWV and in its program during the first years of the organization. The state constitution of the League stated that, "the object of the Alabama League of Women

<sup>35</sup>The Federation of Women's Clubs was the most prominent affiliated organization of the ALWV. *Montgomery Journal*, November 6, 1921.

<sup>36</sup>*Ibid.*, January 9, 1921.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, November 23, 1921.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, April 10, 1920; May 20, 1920.

Voters shall be to foster education in citizenship, to support improved legislation and to urge Alabama women to become enrolled voters. As an organization, the Alabama League of Women Voters shall be allied with, and support no party."<sup>40</sup> The nonpartisan plank, if strictly defined, meant the ALWV could not endorse either a party or an individual in a political contest. On both the national and state levels, however, the interpretation of the policy became something quite different. A month before the national elections in 1920, Chairman Catt formally endorsed Governor James M. Cox of Ohio, for President. Catt said her stand was nonpartisan, and she favored Cox only because of his support of the League of Nations and not the Democratic Party.<sup>41</sup> Miss Luna E. Davie, in her *Montgomery Journal* column, "The Woman Voter," defended Catt with the interpretation that the League "might and can line up for or against a single man if the need arose, not as a democrat or a republican but as a man."<sup>42</sup> In 1921, the Montgomery League of Women Voters presented the City Board of Commissioners with a petition which endorsed the reappointment of J. Lister Hill as president of the City Board of Education. Hill was not reappointed to the position, and the Montgomery League, along with other women's organizations, accused the city fathers through the pages of the *Montgomery Journal* of not listening to them.<sup>43</sup>

During the time between the ALWV state convention in April, 1920, and the official proclamation granting woman suffrage by Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby on August 26, 1920, the women of Alabama remained virtually silent and powerless. They could only watch the struggle in the various state legislatures throughout the country and hope that before the November elections one of them would vote to become the magic number thirty-six, the number of states needed to ratify the Nineteenth Amendment. Although no public statements were issued, the various state and county leaders in Alabama began to formalize plans for one of the League's primary concerns — citizenship schools in every Congressional and county district. The *Montgomery Journal* printed in Davie's column, "Suffrage News," the questions and answers of the examina-

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, January 9, 1921.

<sup>41</sup>*Birmingham Age-Herald*, October 22, 1920.

<sup>42</sup>*Montgomery Journal*, October 24, 1920.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, April 3, 1921; April 17, 1921.

tions used in the citizenship school in Chicago. The purpose was to inform women and to stir enthusiasm for the citizenship schools in Alabama.<sup>44</sup> In September, 1920, one month following Tennessee's passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, Birmingham opened the first citizenship school in the state. The three major cities in Alabama, Birmingham, Montgomery, and Mobile, held their schools consecutively under the direction of Mrs. T. T. Cotnam of Little Rock, Arkansas, who was Chairman of the Arkansas LWV and specially trained for citizenship school leadership.<sup>45</sup>

The schools lasted four or five days and the lessons were divided between practical voting procedures and advanced lessons in political science. All men and women were urged to attend the lessons and speeches, where registration and voting procedures were carefully explained and mock elections were conducted. State and county ALWV leaders discussed legislation from a woman's standpoint as well as the object and planks of the League of Women Voters. Prominent judges, the heads of state and county departments, mayors, and United States District Attorney Evie Petters were among those who participated in the afternoon speeches. The topics included the structure of state, county, and city government in Alabama; the history of American government; the League of Nations; and education.<sup>46</sup> Throughout her speeches Cotnam emphasized the LWV's desire to wipe out citizen's ignorance of government and politics. The key to politics she said, was to learn the machinery and operation of the political parties. Cotnam announced that the League supported federal aid to education and that it would spend \$100 million in appropriations on eliminating illiteracy in the South.<sup>47</sup>

The City of Birmingham, which had the most active local league, conducted another citizenship school in September, 1921, in cooperation with the University of Alabama extension division. Professors conducted the school which emphasized leader-

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<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, March 28, 1920.

<sup>45</sup>*Birmingham Age-Herald*, September 18, 1920; September 22, 1920.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, September 18, 1920; *Montgomery Journal*, September 28, 1920; September 29, 1920; *Mobile News Item*, September 27, 1920; September 30, 1920.

<sup>47</sup>*Birmingham Age-Herald*, September 22, 1920.



ship training for women in politics.<sup>48</sup> The ALWV Executive Board, encouraged by the response in Birmingham, petitioned Dr. John W. Abercrombie, State Superintendent of Education, to institute a course in practical citizenship in the state public school system.<sup>49</sup>

The ALWV spent its formative years trying to put together a cohesive state organization which would be recognized as an effective, nonpartisan, political force. Its main activities focused on the organization of county leagues and Congressional districts and the endorsement of national and state programs. A resolution was passed at the second LWV national convention in April, 1921, that said state leagues would not be compelled to support the same legislation the national league was working for. However, the state league officers had to inform the state members of the legislation the national LWV was concerned with and could not prevent discussion of the national legislative issues among the state membership.<sup>50</sup>

Several major bills in Congress were of particular interest to the state League: the Rogers Bill, which would establish independent citizenship for women so that women married to aliens could retain their citizenship and conversely; the Fess Bill, which would enlarge the scope of the present Smith-Hughes Law to allow state universities to spend as much for women's work in home economics as was spent for men's work in agriculture; the Gronma Bill, which would create a Federal Livestock Commission for the regulation of meat packers; and the Smith-Towner Educational Bill, designed to create a Federal Department of Education with a Cabinet officer at its head. The LWV became especially interested in two bills on child labor and welfare. The Curtis Guard Bill called for the regulation of child labor in the District of Columbia, and many hoped it would serve as an incentive for other states.<sup>51</sup> The most important bill was the Sheppard-Towner Bill which provided for appropriations for centers of industries in the hygiene

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<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, September 20, 1921. Earlier that year the University of Alabama had conducted courses in citizenship as a part of their summer school program. Over 800 women attended. *Montgomery Journal*, June 21, 1921.

<sup>49</sup>*Montgomery Journal*, June 23, 1921.

<sup>50</sup>*Birmingham Age-Herald*, April 14, 1921. Most of the resolutions were incorporated in President Carrie C. Catt's speech.

<sup>51</sup>*Montgomery Journal*, January 16, 1921.

of maternity and infancy through public health nurses and other suitable methods. The passage of the bill late in December 1921, marked the first great legislative work brought about through the concerted effort of all women of all organizations in the United States.<sup>52</sup>

In 1915, the state legislature of Alabama passed a law which provided for a probation court official and a juvenile court commission in every county of Alabama. However, by late 1921 only two of the larger counties had established these positions. Administrators and political leaders in Alabama recognized the enthusiasm of the ALWV for child welfare reform, and in 1921 the Child Welfare Department of Alabama asked the ALWV to undertake the establishment of an Advisory Juvenile Commission and probation officer in every county. The ALWV eagerly began a statewide campaign to enforce the law. The ALWV must be given at least partial credit for the immediate action taken in a number of the larger counties in the state.<sup>53</sup>

The first Equal Rights Amendment in the United States was proposed in 1921, and it created an even greater controversy than the one introduced in the 1970's. The fight for the amendment became so heated before the struggle was over that the whole women's movement was split apart. The two leading opponents in the battle were the National Women's Party (NWP)<sup>54</sup> and the League of Women Voters. Mrs. Solon Jacobs of Birmingham became one of the leading spokesmen for the League.<sup>55</sup> The roots of the controversy went back to a split in the NAWSA over ideology and tactics in 1914. The militant members of the organization formed a separate group called the Congressional Union for Woman Suffrage, which two years later became the Woman's Party. The NWP was a very narrow based, tight-knit group whose sole purpose was to ensure that women would have the same rights as men in all things. Before the passage of the suffrage amendment, the NWP "pro-

<sup>52</sup>Birmingham *Age-Herald*, December 3, 1921.

<sup>53</sup>Montgomery *Journal*, December 18, 1921; Mobile *Daily Register*, November 24, 1921.

<sup>54</sup>National Woman's Party (NWP) and Women's Party (WP) were used interchangeably.

<sup>55</sup>Mrs. Solon Jacobs was one of the leading suffragists in the country. She was the Secretary of the National LWV and the state committee-woman of the Democratic party. Birmingham *Age-Herald*, March 26, 1920; June 26, 1920.

posed to 'teach' the lawmakers that inaction on the woman suffrage amendment would cost them votes in the full suffrage states."<sup>56</sup> The NWP, led by the iron hand of Miss Alice Paul, minimized the value of the suffrage victory and declared in 1921 that women were still subordinate to men. "Rejecting the plea of other women's groups to build a reform coalition on behalf of disarmament, birth control, and social-welfare legislation, the Woman's Party pledged itself to work exclusively for the goal of total equality for women."<sup>57</sup>

The more conservative NAWSA and later the National LWV believed in "lobbying techniques based upon tact and superior information rather than threat," though the LWV went out of its way to avoid being identified as a lobbying agency for one group only. "The National LWV program included a gradual adjustment, through state legislation, of the civil status of women as fast as sentiment in states would allow."<sup>58</sup> In October, 1921, the NWP went before the Alabama legislature to push for the "Bill of Equal Rights" drawn up by their party. Immediately, the ALWV became involved in the fight and a verbal war began in the states' newspapers. Alarmed by the potential danger to the gains already won by women, and in an attempt to tone down the fight, Jacobs announced that the LWV was not against the NWP as an organization, but it was against the bill.<sup>59</sup> Many feared that the "blanket law" as proposed would "wipe out those protective laws for women which will have been secured slowly and as a result of education and survey."<sup>60</sup>

A conference of women's organizations was called on the eve of the opening of Congress to persuade the NWP to withhold their amendment until or unless it could be modified in such a manner as to satisfy the other women's organizations. The conference also wanted to make sure it would not endanger the legislation women had already secured in fifteen states. The NWP refused to compromise, and the bill was sent to Congress in 1922. For a while it seemed that the bill might have a chance of passing, but it failed for lack of popular backing.

<sup>56</sup>Kraditor, *The Woman Suffrage Movement*, 5.

<sup>57</sup>Chafe, *The American Woman*, 114.

<sup>58</sup>Montgomery *Journal*, December 18, 1921.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, November 13, 1921.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, December 18, 1921.

Internal dissention in the women's organizations and the passage of several reform bills dealing with women in industry weakened the significance of the Equal Rights Bill, and it was soon forgotten by most leaders.<sup>61</sup> The LWV's counter to the idea of total equality of men and women reflected the cautious and less radical ideology of the organization: "the League of Women Voters believes that though in many respects women are the equal of men and should be treated as such, in other respects there are and will always be differences, and these differences call for special legislation."<sup>62</sup>

The actual day-to-day work in education and civic reform was carried out by the county and city leagues. The Leagues' work in the three major cities in Alabama, Birmingham, Montgomery, and Mobile, best illustrate the types of reforms that were advocated and the accomplishments of the League.<sup>63</sup>

Women in Alabama officially received the vote on September 28, 1920, when Governor Thomas E. Kilby signed House Bill 13. The law gave the vote to all citizens over twenty-one.<sup>64</sup> Immediately, the local leagues mobilized their members for voter registration and poll tax payment. Each city and county with a local LWV was divided into precincts with a chairman responsible for registering as many women as possible. Voting literature was distributed in the public schools and on street corners; speeches were made in moving picture houses and churches; and there was considerable house-to-house canvassing. At ward meetings in Mobile practical demonstrations of the

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<sup>61</sup>Chafe, *The American Woman*, 130-132.

<sup>62</sup>Montgomery *Journal*, November 20, 1921.

<sup>63</sup>A Mobile LWV was not formed until October 6, 1920. The city's Civic and Patriotic League performed the same functions as the local LWV until that date. During World War I the Women's War Service was begun to help raise money for disabled soldiers and to assist men in all war work. On June 18, 1919 the organization "after some discussion . . . decided that the war service would continue as an organization, but change its name" to the Civic and Patriotic League. The names of the Civic and Patriotic League's standing committees give a good idea of the kinds of projects it was concerned with: Public Health; Streets, Highways and Cemeteries; Public Memorials; Soldiers and Sailors Aid; City Prisons and Almshouses; Playgrounds and Community Centers; Public Relief; Community Music; Home Demonstration; and Equal Suffrage. *Mobile News Item*, June 24, 1919; September 3, 1920; October 6, 1920; *Mobile Daily Register*, April 3, 1919; June 18, 1919.

<sup>64</sup>Montgomery *Journal*, September 28, 1920.

voting procedures were conducted.<sup>65</sup> By the time the registration books closed in October, 1920, an estimated 123,000 white women and over 100 Negro women had registered.<sup>66</sup>

Registration was only half of the procedure. As soon as the Alabama Supreme Court ruled on January 13, 1921, that women had to pay the poll tax to vote in the 1921 elections, a vigorous campaign was initiated. To alleviate the rush at the Jefferson County courthouse, booths were set up in downtown Birmingham where all voters could pay their poll taxes. The Montgomery LWV asked women to complete questionnaires concerning vital national and state issues when they paid their taxes.<sup>67</sup>

The ALWV's local leagues, firmly convinced that a woman's point of view was essential to good local government, called upon local leaders to appoint a woman to every state and county board, and urged women to run for city commissioners. Mrs. Richard F. Johnston, President of the Birmingham LWV, expressed the League's desire for better child welfare and an informed electorate. "A woman has a keener sense of the right kind of moral conditions that should govern our young, a keener sense of how carefully children should be protected," she said. "We have a war for enlightenment, a war that looks toward conquering our ignorance on all matters that are for the political and social uplift" of Alabama and the country.<sup>68</sup> Though no woman accepted the challenge to run for office, the leagues became directly involved in the city commissioner campaigns. The Mobile LWV adopted a program specifically for the contest and asked each candidate to state his attitude regarding the measures.<sup>69</sup> Birmingham candidates received questionnaires with a notice that failure to comply would be taken as an unwillingness to make their attitudes known.<sup>70</sup>

A significant aspect of the Progressive movement was its

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<sup>65</sup>Mobile *News Item*, October 8, 1920.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.*, October 29, 1920; October 27, 1920; *Montgomery Journal*, October 27, 1920.

<sup>67</sup>*Birmingham Age-Herald*, January 20, 1921; *Montgomery Journal*, December 5, 1920.

<sup>68</sup>*Birmingham Age-Herald*, August 17, 1921.

<sup>69</sup>Mobile *News Item*, July 28, 1921.

<sup>70</sup>*Birmingham Age-Herald*, September 14, 1921.



preoccupation with "cleaning up" government and the cities. At a LWV Regional Convention held in Atlanta, Georgia, in 1921, members unanimously declared war on "boss rule" in government. The LWV accused the "bosses" of not listening to the voters' requests. "In a plea for the education of women voters, Mrs. George Gellhorn of St. Louis, Missouri, vice-chairman of the National LWV, declared the organization[']s work means that women are not going into the big political parties as machine-made rubber stamps, but with ideals, help and inspiration."<sup>71</sup>

Alabama League members rose to the challenge of clean government in Mobile and contested an election of county officials in court. When violations of the election regulations were observed by League members employed at the polling places, the Mobile LWV voted on January 13, 1921, to lay before a grand jury substantial evidence gathered by League officials in the seventh ward that candidates were permitted free access to the voting places on election day, that ballots were taken from the booths and marked outside, and that instructions were issued to the voters.<sup>72</sup> In Mobile, where only one voting place was allowed for each ward, confusion and over-crowding were blamed for much of the illegal activity. Infuriated by the grand jury's decision to dismiss the case, the Mobile LWV sent a warning to the city commissioners stating that, if the election laws were violated in the September election, the League would take the matter all the way to the Alabama Supreme Court. The warning was sent primarily as a protest against the announced intention of holding the municipal election under the plan of one voting place to each ward, instead of under the new redistricting plan put into effect by the county board under the new legislative act. Regardless of whether or not the city commissioners heeded the warning, there were no reported violations in September, 1921.<sup>73</sup>

What began as a "Know Your Birmingham" study by the LWV, quickly mushroomed into a city scandal involving vice and prostitution. In August, 1921, several members of the League attended a court hearing prostitution cases. Alarmed

<sup>71</sup>*Ibid.*, February 9, 1921.

<sup>72</sup>*Mobile Daily Register*, November 5, 1920; *Mobile News Item*, January 13, 1921.

<sup>73</sup>*Mobile News Item*, April 16, 1921.

by the manner in which the cases were handled, the LWV decided to investigate thoroughly the extent of vice in Birmingham and the enforcement of the law. On October 16 a meeting of the LWV was held to present the vice report of the League and to hear evidence from both sides. Several pastors claimed that the people involved in vice considered the present Commissioner of Public Safety their friend and that the authorities simply ignored the "red light district." Judge H. B. Abernathy, speaking on behalf of the city commissioners, told the gathering that "when you change the appetites and passions of men, then you will have moral conditions. Most men, though, don't get good until they get old." He believed that sooner or later all houses of "ill repute" would have to operate in one district of the city, with some type of enforced curfew.<sup>74</sup> Jacobs, representing the ALWV, read a list of 500 houses of ill fame which were never bothered by the police. After two hours of heated debate, Jacobs declared: "If no one else will — the League of Women Voters will clean up Birmingham single-handed." The city commissioners, however, felt the League was treading on their authority and convinced the LWV to investigate solely from a social service standpoint.<sup>75</sup>

The ALWV's eagerness to champion women's rights and civic reform often transformed the local leagues' offices into a complaint and research center. Small, local groups looked to the ALWV for support of their programs. The great majority of the complaints reported by women concerned the rates of public utilities, poor working conditions, juvenile delinquency, the high cost of bread and milk, and sanitary conditions. Though it was impossible to help everyone, the ALWV often represented discontented groups before city boards and in the courts.

Reform groups, in their efforts to promote a particular cause, often forget that other organizations have the right to an opposing opinion. In 1921 the Birmingham LWV invited numerous city organizations to participate in a July 4 "Disarmament by International Agreement" celebration. The local post of the American League declined the invitation, fearing that participation would implicate its support of the issue. Af-

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<sup>74</sup>Birmingham *Age-Herald*, October 16, 1921.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*, November 2, 1921.

<sup>76</sup>*Ibid.*, June 29, 1921; November 11, 1921.

ter careful consideration, the LWV decided that a disarmament celebration would conflict with the significance of Independence Day. Because the League felt that participation would be construed as a repudiation of its support of disarmament, it withdrew completely from the July 4 activities. Several months later a disarmament celebration was sponsored by the LWV, and the League called on all women to unite against all future wars.<sup>76</sup>

At the first annual convention of the ALWV, in April, 1921, members voted to spend \$5,500 to increase their membership and arouse interest in their programs during the next year. The two primary objectives of the ALWV, education in citizenship and involvement in political parties, were reaffirmed and a greatly expanded health program was inaugurated. The members of the League were encouraged by the accomplishments of their first year and predicted even greater results in the years ahead.<sup>77</sup> The League's weakest point was the lack of organization outside the cities. Most rural women took no interest in the ALWV, and the leagues in small towns suffered from a lack of leadership. Even in the major cities the structure of the leagues was very loose. Birmingham was the only large city to hold regular meetings, as most of the leagues met only when there was a special issue to discuss.

State-wide reaction to the ALWV was generally very favorable. It enjoyed the enthusiastic support of two Progressive newspapers, the *Montgomery Journal* and the *Mobile News Item*. Though neither of the newspapers were the leading journals in their cities, the League benefited from the publicity and favorable editorials. One of the most influential aspects of the press support was the weekly column entitled "The Woman Voter," published in the *Montgomery Journal*; it was written by Miss Luna E. Davie, publicity chairman of the ALWV.<sup>78</sup> At a time when the vast majority of women lived in rural areas, Davie's column was probably the only suffrage news they received. When the women in rural areas realized that the vote could secure better roads and schools for their

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<sup>76</sup>*Ibid.*, April 26, 1921.

<sup>78</sup>*Montgomery Journal*, September 10, 1920. "The Woman Voter" originally was called "Suffrage News" before 1920. "The Suffrage News" was also written by Luna E. Davie.

districts, they quickly abandoned their indifferent attitude and became registered voters.<sup>79</sup>

As the district descendent of the powerful NAWSA, the ALWV from its very beginning was respected by editors, politicians, educators, and many who profess a "Progressive" political and social philosophy. The League was convinced that once women were allowed to use their intelligence and energy, domestic reform would sweep the country and Americans could once more be truly proud of her institutions. There were two recurrent themes that ran throughout the ALWV literature and contemporary newspapers and periodicals. The first was the belief that females, by virtue of their sex, had a special concern for issues like social welfare and education.<sup>80</sup> This was evident in 1919 when the NAWSA became the LWV. The LWV was faced with deciding what kind of organization it would be: a group concerned with nonpartisan issues or an independent political force. The nonpartisan policy won in the end because the women believed that "unless the women retained their identity as a separate interest group they would destroy the very principles which made them unique. Females were concerned with public service and high ideals, males with private profit and personal power."<sup>81</sup>

The second theme was that once Southern women received the vote the burden of the "myth of Southern womanhood" would be lifted. Women saw the federal amendment as a symbol of the "new woman," whose role would be greatly modified in Southern society.<sup>82</sup> Yet, what happened to the great crusade that was to restore a decent and moral society? Where was the new Southern woman who crusaded to free herself from the restrictive traditions of Southern life? Perhaps she did not escape the myth at all, but succeeded only in raising it to a higher level. The new myth, after women received the vote, proclaimed that Southern women, armed with the vote, would clean up and watch over all of society, just as they had watched over their families before the vote. For after all, the ALWV was "essentially a struggle of white, native-born middle-

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<sup>79</sup>*Ibid.*, June 22, 1921.

<sup>80</sup>Chafe, *The American Woman*, 35-36.

<sup>81</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>82</sup>Scott, "After Suffrage: Southern Women in the Twenties," 298.

class women for the right to participate more fully in the public affairs of a society, the basic structure of which they accepted."<sup>83</sup>

The failure of the ALWV to construct a cohesive organization often meant that some of its leaders came close to violating the policies of the LWV. It also meant internal dissent, and therefore its influence and effectiveness were significantly reduced. Despite the number of reforms that did occur as a result of the ALWV, most Alabama women chose not to become a part of the great crusade "to uplift a nation." The ALWV, as a product of the Progressive era in the United States, were no more successful than its creator.

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<sup>83</sup>Kraditor, *The Woman Suffrage Movement*, x.



## NINETEENTH CENTURY MONTGOMERY AUTHORS

by

Benjamin B. Williams

A perusal of a list of Alabama authors of the nineteenth century will indicate that the cities of Mobile and Tuscaloosa produced more writers than any of the other cities in the state, but Montgomery contributed a representative number of the state's literary figures. As is the case with authors in other sections of Alabama, Montgomery writers were rarely native to the city or to the state. The writers considered in this study are classified as Montgomery authors because of their length of residence in the city or because of the writings they published while residing there. I have selected the eleven most representative literary figures of nineteenth century Montgomery, and have taken a chronological approach with regard to the age of the writer.

The first Alabama novel to be written in the state (although this was not the first novel published in Alabama<sup>1</sup>) was the work of a Montgomerian, Dr. Samuel Clarke Oliver. Oliver was born in Elbert County, Georgia, July 29, 1799, and came to Montgomery County, Alabama, in the 1820's. On January 10, 1826, he married Mildred McGehee, a daughter of Abner McGehee who was one of the earliest settlers of Montgomery County. Trained as a physician, Oliver soon combined this profession with that of planter, operating a plantation at McGehee's Switch south of the city of Montgomery. In 1829, he was elected to the state legislature, and served in the lower house until his election to the state senate in 1839. Altogether, he served a total of eighteen years in the legislature, affiliated with the Whig Party. On November 15, 1833, when "stars fell on Alabama," a daughter was born to Dr. Oliver and appropriately named Mary Meteora.

In 1844, Oliver published his novel *Onslow: or the Protege of an Enthusiast*. Two years later he moved to the city of

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<sup>1</sup>The first novel published in Alabama was *The Lost Virgin of the South* (1833) by Wiley Conner, editor and publisher of the *Courtland Herald*. See Benjamin B. Williams, "The Identity of Alabama's First Novelist," *Alabama Review*, XVII (July, 1964), 234-235.

Montgomery which remained his home until his death on April 13, 1848.

Samuel Clarke Oliver's novel *Onslow: or the Protege of an Enthusiast: An Historical Traditionary Tale of the South* was published by G. B. Zieber and Company of Philadelphia. *Onslow* is the story of a lost heir, set against the background of the Revolutionary War in South Carolina. Julian Onslow, the protagonist, comes to South Carolina as a paroled Colonial and is suspected of being a spy by both the Tories and the Whigs. As he attempts to unravel the mystery of his parentage, Onslow is caught up in the struggle between the colonial revolutionaries and the British loyalists. The villains of the story are the Tory raiders known as the "Bloody Scouts" who are trying to discredit the wealthy Whig and neutral families and to confiscate their lands.

The novel abounds in skirmishes and narrow escapes. The love story of Julian Onslow and St. Illes Grayson plays a prominent part in the book. In the end, Julian is discovered to be the lost heir of the wealthy Walden family, and an acceptable match for Miss Grayson. The subtitle relates to Julian's connection with Geoffrey Jarvis, a mineralogist, who had reared young Julian and had hoped to enlist the boy in the pursuit of his own enthusiasm, mineralogy. Jarvis is something of a *deus ex machina*, appearing on pivotal occasions throughout the story and possessing at the end the necessary proofs of Julian Onslow's identity.

Henry Washington Hilliard, who was a resident of Montgomery for almost thirty years, achieved acclaim locally, nationally, and internationally in the political arena, and was also the author of a novel. Born near Fayetteville, North Carolina, on August 4, 1808, Hilliard moved with his family to Columbia, South Carolina, where he received his education, graduating from South Carolina College in 1826. In 1829, he moved to Athens, Georgia, where he set up a law practice. Two years later, Hilliard was elected the first professor of literature at the new University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa. In 1834, Hilliard resigned his professorship and moved to Montgomery to pursue a career in law and politics.

Hilliard maintained his residence in Montgomery for nearly thirty years, during which time his political career flourished. A Whig in politics, Hilliard was elected to the legislature in 1838, served as a delegate to the national Whig convention in 1839 where he helped to get the vice-presidential nomination for John Tyler, and served as an elector for Harrison and Tyler in the 1840 canvass. In 1841, he ran unsuccessfully for a seat in the United States House of Representatives, but in May, 1842, he was appointed charge d'affaires to Belgium by President Tyler. In 1845, he was elected to Congress from the Montgomery district and served three terms. Though not a candidate for reelection in 1850, Hilliard campaigned throughout the district for the Whigs, debating the issues with the Democratic Party spokesman William Lowndes Yancey. Again the Whigs carried the district. The break-up of the national Whig Party in the 1850's caused Hilliard to seek a political home elsewhere. He supported the Democrat Buchanan in 1856, and in the crucial election of 1860, he first favored Douglas, then Breckinridge, and finally campaigned for the Constitutional Union Party candidates Bell and Everett.

Hilliard followed his state of Alabama reluctantly into secession, but when called upon by President Davis to undertake the mission to urge the state of Tennessee to secede, he responded immediately. Hilliard received no political appointment from the Confederate government, and on April 24, 1862, he accepted a commission as colonel in the Army and recruited five battalions of approximately 3,000 men. He commanded these troops, known as "Hilliard's Legion," until December 1, 1862, at which time he resigned his commission. Hilliard's Legion later served in Kentucky and Tennessee, and took heavy casualties at Chickamauga. On November 25, 1863, the Legion was reorganized into the 59th and 60th Alabama Infantry regiments.

Following his brief military career, Hilliard returned to Montgomery where he entered the active Methodist ministry, having been a licensed minister for many years. His first wife died on June 22, 1862, and on August 7, he married a Montgomery widow, Eliza Ann Glascock Mays which gave rise to local gossip and apparently led to his accepting a call to St. John's

Methodist Church in Augusta, Georgia.<sup>2</sup> In October, 1863, Hilliard left the pulpit to reestablish his law practice.

Hilliard spent most of the Civil War years in Montgomery and Augusta, Georgia, and aside from his brief military venture in 1862 he took no further part in the struggle. It was during this period that Hilliard wrote his one novel, *DeVane: A Story of Plebians and Patricians*. The writing of this book was no doubt an attempt to fill the days of inactivity occasioned by his exclusion from the political and military events of the time.

*DeVane* fits the pattern of many of the novels of the nineteenth century. The primary theme is the conflict in the hero DeVane between religion and agnosticism. DeVane, a Virginia patrician, comes among the Alabama plebians, all Methodists, and learns to appreciate and accept their Christian viewpoint. Hilliard's novel is a defense of Methodism against the charges that that denomination appeals essentially to the emotionalism of the uncultivated. The novel was first published by Blelock and Company of New York in 1865, and later at Nashville, Tennessee, by the Publishing House of the M. E. Church, South, in 1889.

After the war, Hilliard aligned himself with the Republican Party, and made an unsuccessful try for Congress in 1876. The following year he was appointed Minister to Brazil by President Hayes. The abolition of slavery was a paramount issue in Brazil during Hilliard's ministry, and his counsel was sought by the anti-slavery forces in that country. Hilliard's views, publicly expressed, are credited in part with hastening emancipation in Brazil. After the election of Garfield in 1881, Hilliard resigned his post and returned to Georgia, settling in Atlanta where he lived out his remaining years. In the last year of life he published his memoirs under the title *Politics and Pen Pictures*, recalling his acquaintances and associations with such national leaders as William Henry Harrison, John Tyler, Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, John Quincy Adams, and Millard Fillmore. Hilliard died in Atlanta on December 17, 1892, and is buried in Montgomery's Oakwood Cemetery in the plot with his first wife and three sons.

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<sup>2</sup>Evans C. Johnson, "Henry W. Hilliard and the Civil War Years," *Alabama Review*, XVII (April, 1964), 109.

John Dennis Phelan lived in Montgomery from 1852 to 1868, serving as clerk of the Alabama Supreme Court and as a Supreme Court Justice. Phelan was born in New Brunswick, New Jersey, in 1810, but came to Huntsville, Alabama, with his parents when he was a young boy. He received his early schooling in Huntsville and graduated from the University of Tennessee. Choosing law as a profession, he was admitted to practice in 1832, and edited the Huntsville *Democrat* with Phillip Woodson from July 26, 1832, probably until his election to the legislature in 1834. In 1836, he was elected Attorney-General of Alabama, and two years later moved to Tuscaloosa, later representing that county for one term in the legislature. For eleven years, Phelan served as Circuit Judge of Marion County, and upon his election to the Alabama Supreme Court in 1832, he made his home in Montgomery.

Phelan's avocation was poetry, and although he never brought out a volume of verses, he attained more than a local reputation for his poems which appeared in the periodical press. Two of Phelan's Civil War poems were included in William Gilmore Simms' collection *War Poetry of the South* which was published by Richardson and Company of New York in 1866. Both of these poems express Phelan's Southern patriotism; they are entitled "Ye Men of Alabama" and "The Good Old Cause."<sup>3</sup>

In 1865, the Reconstruction government removed Phelan from the Supreme Court, but allowed him to serve as clerk of the court until he was again disqualified in 1868. He was offered and accepted a professorship at the University of the South, Sewanee, Tennessee, at this time and remained in that position until his death. Phelan died in September, 1879, while on a visit to Marion, Alabama.

Johnson Jones Hooper, whose humorous writings have earned him a place in American literature, made his home in Montgomery for about ten years during two separate periods of residence. Hooper was born on June 9, 1815, in Wilmington, North Carolina, and in 1835, came to LaFayette, Chambers County, Alabama, to read law in his brother's office. He com-

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<sup>3</sup>William Gilmore Simms, *War Poetry of the South* (New York, 1866), 70, 87. See also, Benjamin B. Williams, "Alabama Civil War Poets," *Alabama Review*, XV (October, 1962), 243-252.



bined his law practice with newspaper editing, and became nationally famous as a "funny man" when his humorous sketches were reprinted in the New York *Spirit of the Times* in the 1840's. In 1845, he published his first collection of humor, *Some Adventures of Captain Simon Suggs*. The following year, Hooper came to Montgomery as associate editor of the *Alabama Journal*, and remained there until 1849, the year his second book of humor, *A Ride with Old Kit Kuncker*, was published in Tuscaloosa.<sup>4</sup> After a term as solicitor of the Ninth Judicial Circuit, Hooper returned to Montgomery in 1854 to establish the *Montgomery Mail*, one of the most influential newspapers in pre-Civil War Alabama. In 1856, Hooper wrote a book on hunting entitled *Dog and Gun*, and in 1859, he edited and published *Woodward's Reminiscences of the Creek, or Muscogee Indians*.

When the Confederate government was formed, Hooper, who had supported secession in the *Mail*, had aspirations of gaining an important post in the new government; however, his reputation as a humorist seemed to keep people from taking him seriously. When the Provisional Congress of the Confederacy convened in Montgomery, Hooper severed his connection with the *Mail* to accept the post of Secretary of Congress. He left Montgomery when the Confederate government moved to Richmond, and in the permanent reorganization of the Congress, he lost his position. Disappointed, Hooper lived out his last days in Richmond. He died on June 7, 1862, and is buried in Shockhoe Cemetery in Richmond.

William Falconer is the only native Montgomerian among the writers here considered. Descended from one of the earliest settlers, Falconer was a lawyer and a pre-war Whig who opposed secession. Falconer's only literary effort was a novel, *Bloom and Brier; or As I Saw It Long Ago*, published by Claxton, Remsen and Company of Philadelphia in 1870. The birth and death dates of William Falconer have not been ascertained but the best evidence indicates that he was born in 1822 and died in the early 1880's. Falconer dedicated his novel to Henry Washington Hilliard, the leader of the anti-secession Whigs in the 1850's, and in *Bloom and Brier*, written during Reconstruction, he made it clear that he still looked on secession as a grave mistake. One of the most interesting aspects of *Bloom and*

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<sup>4</sup>W. Stanley Hoole, *Alias Simon Suggs* (Tuscaloosa, 1952), 69-70.

*Brier*, which otherwise is a typical sentimental romance of the period, is the fictionalized account of the Yancey-Hilliard debates of the 1850's in which Yancey is caricatured as the fire-eating Colonel Haywood.

Julia Louisa Hentz Keyes, daughter of novelist Caroline Lee Hentz, lived in Montgomery for several years where her husband, John Washington Keyes, practiced dentistry before and after the Civil War. Julia Keyes was born at Chapel Hill, North Carolina, on October 11, 1828, and came to Florence, Alabama, with her parents in 1834. She lived in Alabama until her marriage in 1846, and at Marianna, Florida, before her husband moved his practice to Montgomery in 1857. John Keyes served in Hilliard's Legion, in the 60th Alabama Regiment, and was surgeon of the 17th Alabama Regiment at the end of the war. In 1867, the Keyes family migrated from Montgomery to Brazil where Dr. Keyes served as dentist to the Emperor Dom Pedro. In 1870, the family returned to Montgomery, and later moved to Wewahitchka, Florida. Julia Keyes died in 1879.

In the pre-Civil War period, Julia Keyes contributed poems to periodicals, and in 1859, won a poetry prize for her "A Dream of Locust Dell," based on her early life in Florence where her parents conducted the Locust Dell Academy from 1834 to 1843. During the Civil War, Julia Keyes published a number of poems in newspapers and magazines, two of which, "Soldier in the Rain" and "Only One Killed," appeared in Simms' *War Poetry of the South*. Unlike the majority of war poetry which deals with patriotism and elegies for the dead, Julia Keyes' verses are concerned with the mental anguish of the families at home and with the physical sufferings of the soldiers in battle.

Rosalie Miller Murphy signed the first "Preface" of her novel *Destiny* in Montgomery with her maiden name in 1862, and signed a second "Preface" with her married name in New York where M. Doolady published the book in 1867. No biographical information about this author had come to light, but she was probably born about 1842 and died around the turn of the century. The novel *Destiny* is pure escape fiction in the genre of domestic sentimentalism and, although it was written

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<sup>5</sup>Rhoda Coleman Ellison, *Early Alabama Publications* (Tuscaloosa, 1947), 178.

in Montgomery during the Civil War, made no reference to the conflict.

Thaddeus Constantine Willis Brewer lived the last eleven years of his life on his farm, "The Cedars," which was located across the highway from what is now Dannelly Airport. Born in Sumter County, Alabama, on March 15, 1844, Brewer began work as a printer, and from 1865 to 1880 edited the Wilcox (County) *Times* and the Hayneville *Examiner*. Brewer was a lawyer, treasurer of Lowndes County, and state auditor. He also served in both houses of the Alabama legislature, and two terms in the U. S. House of Representatives. After retiring from public life, Brewer moved to Montgomery County. He died at the "Cedars" on October 30, 1912, and is buried in the \$16,000 monument which he designed and built on his land.

Brewer's first published volume is the valuable reference work *Alabama: Her History, Resources, War Records, and Public Men* which appeared in 1872. His most interesting literary work is a novel, *Children of Issachar* (1884), set in the Reconstruction era, and perhaps the best realistic novel written in Alabama in the nineteenth century.

*The Children of Issachar* takes its title and theme from 1 Chronicles, XII:32: "and the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times." In the novel, Brewer draws a parallel between the supporters of King David, who helped drive the Phillistines from the land of Israel, and the men of the South during Reconstruction, who fought to rid the land of carpetbaggers and scalawags.

In addition to the political plot, there is an ill-fated love plot in which the wronged woman murders her faithless lover and is tried for the crime. The themes of violation, revenge, and acquittal are cleverly tied together for both the political and the love plot. There are no really good or wholly evil characters in the book. Some of the best characters resort to violence; the Southerners Hal Neilson and Catherine Vinell are less than admirable; the former Union soldier Harrod is sympathetically treated; and the worst offender, Watson, the conniving carpetbagger, escapes lynching as two other men are killed in the attempt to capture him.

Brewer's last two books, *The Secret of Mankind* (1895) and *Egypt and Israel* (1910), are among the most unusual works by an Alabamian, dealing with fantastic and occult subjects.

Clifford Anderson Lanier, younger brother of Sidney Lanier, became a permanent resident of Montgomery in July, 1865, at the conclusion of his Confederate service. He was born at Griffin, Georgia, on April 24, 1844, and in 1858, came with Sidney for the first time to work at the Exchange Hotel in Montgomery. For a year and a half he was a student at Oglethorpe College, and entered the Confederate service in 1862. He returned home to Macon, Georgia, in May, 1865, before moving to Montgomery that summer. He was a clerk and later proprietor of the Exchange Hotel until 1884, when he entered the real estate business. He died in Montgomery on November 3, 1908.

Clifford Lanier's first book was a war story entitled *Thorn-Fruit*.<sup>6</sup> In 1871, he wrote a story of Reconstruction called *Carpet-Baggery* which remained unpublished until 1939, and in 1893 he wrote *Love and Loyalty at War*. As early as 1874, Lanier began publishing poetry in magazines, and in 1902 he published a collection of his poems in *Apollo and Keats on Browning; A Fantasy and Other Poems. Sonnets to Sidney Lanier, and Other Lyrics* was edited and published by Edward Howard Griggs in 1915, a posthumous collection of Clifford Lanier's poems.

Kate Slaughter McKinney, who wrote under the name "Katydid," lived in Montgomery for fifty years. She published two volumes of poems and two novels in addition to periodical publications. Kate McKinney was born at London, Kentucky, on February 6, 1859, and graduated from Daughter's College, Harrodsburg, Kentucky, in 1876. She moved to Montgomery, Alabama, in 1890, and made her home here thereafter.

Mrs. McKinney's first book was *Katydid Poems* (1887), written in Kentucky, but her other three books were written and published after she came to Montgomery. Her first novel, *Silent Witness: A Tale of a Kentucky Tragedy*, was issued by

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<sup>6</sup>David Jones, "Clifford Anderson Lanier," *Georgia Review*, XIV (Summer, 1960), 211.

Neale Publishing Company of New York in 1906, and her second novel, *Weed By the Wall*, was published by Badger Press of Boston in 1911. Mrs. McKinney's last work was a volume of poems entitled *Palace of Silver* in 1927. She died in Montgomery on March 2, 1939.

Francis Bartow Lloyd acquired his reputation as a humorist writing under the pseudonym "Rufus Sanders" while serving as the city editor of the *Montgomery Advertiser* in the 1880's and 1890's.<sup>7</sup> Lloyd was born near Mt. Willing in Lowndes County on August 12, 1861. His father was a country doctor, and Lloyd grew up on farms in Lowndes and Butler counties. He attended the rural field schools and had one year at the Greenville Academy. In 1882, he went to work as a reporter for the *Selma Morning Times*, and later became city editor of that paper. He came to Montgomery as city editor of the *Advertiser* in 1886, and four years later began his humorous "Rufus Sanders" sketches. The sketches became so popular and were so widely copied that Lloyd syndicated his column on August 16, 1891. The income from his syndicated feature allowed him to retire from active journalism and pursue his interest in politics. Lloyd moved his family to Butler County, and in 1896 was elected to the state legislature. He made an unsuccessful state-wide race for Secretary of State, and planned to seek that office again in 1898, but his political career and his life were ended on August 25, 1897, when he was murdered on a country road near his home.

In 1898, his wife collected a number of his feature articles and published them in *Sketches of Country Life by Rufus Sanders*. In these sketches, Lloyd displayed his thorough knowledge of the frontier humor produced by Johnson Jones Hooper as many of his pieces are variations on themes and situations handled by the earlier Alabama humorist.

These eleven nineteenth century Montgomery authors represent the best of those who worked in the realm of literary fiction. There were several Montgomerians who published significant works in non-fiction in that time period, but these are outside the scope of this study.

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<sup>7</sup>Margaret Gillis Figh, "Bartow Lloyd, Humorist and Philosopher of the Alabama Back-Country," *Alabama Review*, V (April, 1952), 83-99.



# LOVE OF LABOR: A NOTE ON DANIEL PRATT'S EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

1854

by

Randall M. Miller

Today, in an age of consumerism and rightful distrust of the glib patter of Madison Avenue promotionals, we might dismiss the antebellum factory managers' claims of concern for the health and person of their employees as so much hokum. The sorry history of the late nineteenth century factory towns in the South, grinding "lintheads" down in debt and despair, sticks in our mind. Conditions in the antebellum textile mills dotting the piney woods, fall line regions of the South were certainly no better. The crude machinery in the factories, the low wages, the unhealthful conditions, and the increasing competition with Negro slave labor in the textile mills endangered not only life and limb but the crusty pride of the poor white operatives drawn from the piney woods.<sup>1</sup> Most workers in antebellum Southern factories looked upon their employment as a waystation to shelter them during hard times on the farm or during slack season. Farmers of the piney woods sent wives and children to the mills to bolster sagging farm incomes. Some fathers followed their families into the mills, but, if we are to believe contemporary assessments by factory managers and owners, these men proved a peripatetic lot, slow to learn new skills and reluctant to throw off the habits of lethargy and strong drink. Shadrach Mims, agent for Daniel Pratt's cotton factory at Prattville and sometime historian of Autauga County, summed up the experience using poor whites

<sup>1</sup>The standard treatment of the nineteenth century textile industry in the South remains Broadus Mitchell, *The Rise of the Cotton Mills in the South* (Baltimore, 1921). Recent assessments of antebellum activities include Ernest McP. Lander, Jr., *The Textile Industry in Antebellum South Carolina* (Baton Rouge, 1969); Randall M. Miller, "The Cotton Mill Movement in Antebellum Alabama" (doctoral dissertation, Ohio State University, 1971); Richard W. Griffin, "The Origins of the Industrial Revolution in Georgia: Cotton Textiles, 1810-1865," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, XLII (December, 1958), 354-375; and Diffie W. Standard and R. W. Griffin, "The Cotton Textile Industry in Ante-Bellum North Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Review*, XXXIV (January, 1957), 15-35, (April, 1957), 131-164. A good, brief survey of Alabama is R. W. Griffin, "Cotton Manufacture in Alabama to 1865," *Alabama Historical Quarterly*, XVIII (Fall, 1956), 289-307.

at Prattville, one of the several thriving factory villages in the antebellum South and a model for the factory town of the late nineteenth century South, stating that the mill hands were "brought up from the piney woods, many of them with no sort of training to any kind of labor; and in learning many mistakes and blunders were made fatal to success." The fathers remained immoral and fond of ardent spirits, but the children, when exposed to Pratt's careful program of religious education and moral uplift through Sabbath schools and regular preaching in the plain style, showed promise of improvement and industry.<sup>2</sup>

Pratt, like William Gregg in South Carolina, championed Southern economic diversification as a first step toward breaking the South's bondage to the North. He argued for industrialism on a modest scale, drawing off surplus capital and labor from cotton production and so raising agricultural prices and keeping profits at home by working up the fibre in local mills. Central to his theme of economic self-sufficiency was his call for better utilization of the unemployed poor whites idling in the piney woods region. Pratt sought out this labor and invested great energy in attempting to inculcate in his charges the New England virtues of sobriety, thrift, and enterprise. Pratt's was a scheme marked by paternalism, what with his close supervision of the workers' morals and his support for religion and education. The letter below suggests something of the genuine concern felt by the factory owner for his employees, of that sense of stewardship that characterized the approach of these prototypes of the factory town proprietors. As such, it is a rare insight into the operators of an Alabama factory town, a subject too long neglected by historians.<sup>3</sup>

The letter is published as found in the original. The manuscript letter is in the possession of Mrs. William Scott of West Point, Georgia, and is published with her generous permission.

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<sup>2</sup>Mims, "History of Prattville," in Susan F. H. Tarrant, *Hon. Daniel Pratt: A Biography, with Eulogies on His Life and Character* (Richmond, 1904), 26.

<sup>3</sup>For a discussion of Pratt's thinking on Southern economic development and his industrial experiments at Prattville see Randall M. Miller, "Daniel Pratt's Industrial Urbanism: The Cotton Mill Town in Antebellum Alabama," *Alabama Historical Quarterly*, XXXIV (Spring, 1972), 5-35.

Prattville February 15th 1854

Col. Price Williams

Dear Sir. Having a slight personal acquaintance with you & a long & very favorable acquaintance through my friends and relatives, I take the liberty of addressing you at this time. There is a man by the name of Owen<sup>5</sup> here at this time holding out the most extravagant inducements to our operatives to move to Dog River Factory, with written authority from the Superintendent of your factory to Steam Boats to pay expenses of all hands that may wish to leave here & go to Dog River. Supposing you to be the Agent of this Factory as heretofore, I ask is this doing unto others as you would be done by. These people are well provided for here both temporarily & spiritually. Mr. Pratt as an individual has incurred a heavy expense in order to supply these people with a regular pastoral oversight besides we have one of the best Sabbath schools in the State from which this people derive much advantage. I do not know personally what advantages of this nature your people possess, but from heresay have concluded that they are not equal to ours. Now in view of this premise are you willing as a Christian to lend your influence to place this people in a worse condition than they were whilst here. I will state the condition of one family in particular by the name of Butler who leaves us in order to go to your factory. This man came here some two years past poor & afflicted himself. No one of his large family of children some of them grown had ever heard preaching and not one could either read or write except the mother. We introduced the children into our Sabbath school & in less than 12 months every member of the family became members of our church since which time the mother & one of the children the oldest son died & gave hope in their death. The remainder of the children are regular attendants of our Sabbath school & class meetings & some of them are already beginning to read. For this family I have incurred personally an outlay in cash over thirty

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<sup>4</sup>Williams was a leading Mobile merchant who invested heavily in internal improvements projects and local industry. In 1852 he purchased a controlling interest in the Dog River Factory, which had fallen on hard times since its establishment on Dog River near Mobile in 1849. The factory, managed by Garland Goode, produced coarse cotton fabrics, or Negro cloth, and thread. By 1860 the factory relied heavily on slave labor to supplement the work force.

<sup>5</sup>Unable to identify.

<sup>6</sup>He obviously intended "temporally."

dollars hoping at some future day they would be able to pay. They now leave here in debt to those who have befriended them more than sixty Dollars besides deeply in debt on the score of gratitude for numberless charities for which no remuneration was ever expected. This family have been sorely afflicted at various times since they moved here & to crown the whole the mother & oldest son & nearly grown up the only stays of the family were removed by the stroke of death. Now sir in view of all these facts I charge you as a Christian Gentleman to take care both souls & bodies of this family. Another view of this subject in a business shape I present. This people we have been at the care & expense of training thus far, & almost the time they are prepared to render us service we find another Factory sending an irresponsible agent amongst our people making false impressions as to wages which I am sure you will not as agent acknowledge, proffering to pay all expenses for removal & waiting until they can work it which he says they can do in one month. Now the consequence of all this misrepresentation will be that this very people will be dissatisfied in less than three months, from the fact that they will not realise their expectations. To be a little more particular this man Owen tells Mr Butler that one of his Daughters can get 16\$ per month for warping, which we know not to be true if your Superintendant knows his business. We are employing a Lady who makes from 15 to 18\$ per month, but this Lady is cheaper to us and two such hands as Butler can furnish & does her work much better.<sup>7</sup> Still Butlers girls are good hands for the practice they have had.

[Shadrach Mims]

[Ed.] The fate of the Butler family is unknown. Apparently, Mims's warning that the family would sour on Dog River Factory for its failure to match the promises of Mr. Owen proved true, for a search of the 1855 state census and the manuscript federal census for Dog River Factory in 1860 uncovered no resident by the name of Butler near Dog River Factory. Despite

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<sup>7</sup>In 1850 the average female employee at the Prattville cotton mill received almost \$9 a month in wages, while a man earned an average \$16 per month. Employees also received comfortable cabins, some with gardens. Dog River Factory wage scales never reached those of Prattville, and conditions were less healthful than at Prattville. On wages see Ms. U. S. Census 1850 and 1860, Schedule 5, Alabama: Autauga and Mobile Counties.

such raids on successful factories for a share of the few experienced factory operatives available in the South, and a futile experiment of importing trained cotton hands from France, Dog River Factory failed to survive the Civil War. Pratt's paternalism and his industrial operators prospered in the postwar South.



## HENRY W. HILLIARD AND THE SOUTHERN CAUCUS OF 1848-49: A LETTER TO JOHN MACPHERSON BERRIEN

by

Royce C. McCrary

In December of 1848 and January 1849 southern members of Congress assembled in caucus to combat the northern anti-slavery movement.<sup>1</sup> The Southern Caucus failed miserably to demonstrate southern unity. Three different addresses or position papers resulted from the meeting. One, by Democratic Senator John C. Calhoun of South Carolina, urged southern unity and warned that secession might be required to protect slavery.<sup>2</sup> Another, by Whig Senator John Macpherson Berrien of Georgia, pleaded for support from conservative men of good will, North and South, to quiet the anti-slavery agitation and preserve the nation they all loved<sup>3</sup> The third, by Democratic Congressman Howell Cobb of Georgia, defended the refusal of Unionist Democrats to sign Calhoun's address and promised all would be well if the South relied upon the National Democratic Party.<sup>4</sup> The Southern Caucus officially adopted Calhoun's address but only 48 of the 121 members of Congress from slave states signed it. Only two Whigs supported the Carolinian.<sup>5</sup> Neither Berrien nor Cobb made any real effort to gain signatures from their addresses after the Southern Caucus approved Calhoun's. But Berrien narrowly missed obtaining caucus approval of his work instead of Calhoun's and three other anti-Calhounite Democratic Congressmen signed Cobb's brief. The spirit of party obviously still ruled the South.

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<sup>1</sup>There is no completely adequate account of the Southern Caucus. The following brief summary is derived in part from the editor's "John Macpherson Berrien of Georgia (1781-1856): A Political Biography" (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Georgia, 1971), 344-350.

<sup>2</sup>"Address of the Southern Delegates in Congress," Richard K. Crallé, ed., *The Works of John C. Calhoun* (6 vols., New York, 1853-1855), VI, 290-312.

<sup>3</sup>*Address to the People of the United States, Prepared by John M. Berrien as Reported by the Committee of Fifteen as a Substitute for the Address Presented by J. C. Calhoun* (Washington, D. C., 1849).

<sup>4</sup>Howell Cobb, Linn Boyd, Beverly L. Clarke, and John H. Lumpkin to their constituents, Feb. 26, 1849, R. P. Brooks, ed., "Howell Cobb Papers," *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, V (June 1921), 39-52.

<sup>5</sup>Charles C. Wiltse, *John C. Calhoun* (3 vols. Indianapolis, 1944-1953), III, 388.

Among the Congressmen who opposed Calhoun and supported Berrien at the Southern Caucus was Whig Henry W. Hilliard of Alabama. A former charge d'affairs to Belgium and a three year veteran of the United States House of Representatives, Hilliard was the most important Alabama Whig in 1848.<sup>6</sup> He attracted violent opposition from Alabama Democrats. They charged that he failed to support either Calhoun or Berrien at the Southern Caucus. Indeed, according to the Democrats, Hilliard felt no concern about the plight of the South.<sup>7</sup>

By May 1849 Hilliard had gained Whig nomination for re-election to Congress and was worried about Democratic attacks. He wrote Senator Berrien, going into detail concerning his role in the Southern Caucus and asking the Georgian to corroborate his account since the official records of the Caucus misrepresented his position. Berrien's reply is lost but Hilliard did win re-election.

Hilliard's letter to Berrien is printed below in its entirety. It provides valuable insights into the political career of Alabama's most important Whig.<sup>8</sup>

The original of the hitherto unpublished accompanying letter is in the John Macpherson Berrien papers in the Southern Historical Collection at the University of North Carolina Library. This letter, which has not been corrected in any way, is published with the permission of the Southern Historical Collection.

Montgomery Ala  
8th May 1849

My dear Sir,

Having been unanimously nominated by the Whigs of my

<sup>6</sup>The best study of Hilliard is Evans C. Johnson's "A Political Life of Henry W. Hilliard" (unpublished M. A. thesis, University of Alabama, 1947). The fullest account, though of course a biased one, is Hilliard's autobiography: *Politics and Pen Pictures at Home and Abroad* (New York, 1892).

<sup>7</sup>Carlton Jackson, "A History of the Whig Party in Alabama, 1828-1860," (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Georgia, 1963), 133-140; Hilliard, *Politics and Pen Pictures*, 207-211.

<sup>8</sup>Brief general accounts of Hilliard's role in the Southern Caucus are in Johnson, "Hilliard," 52-53; and Hilliard, *Politics and Pen Pictures*, 198-200.

District for re-election, the Democrats are about to make a determined effort to defeat me. The great point is my opposition to Mr. Calhoun's course in the Southern Meeting, and my refusal to sign his address.

I have stated the course I took — my confidence in you — my estimate of your abilities and patriotism — my co-operation with you — my hearty approval of your address and my decided preference for it over that of Mr. Calhoun.

Will you do me the favor to write me attesting these circumstances as they occurred. My meeting you in the Senate Chamber and our interview in the small room adjoining it, where we agreed in thinking that Mr. Calhoun's address to a section of the Union was not to be acted on, that it ought to be recommitted with a view to preparing an address to the people of the U.S., my calling upon your invitation at your apartments to hear your address — my hearty approval of it and my vote in favor of the motion to agree to the report of the commit which proposed to substitute yours' instead of Mr. Calhoun's address. Venable's<sup>9</sup> journal was so wretchedly kept it cannot be relied on, and in the copy which I have seen my name is omitted in giving the ayes & nays upon the motion to substitute your address for Mr. C's — though I did vote in the affirmative, as I distinctly remember and as our mutual friend Dr. Jones<sup>10</sup> of Ga. writes me that he remembers.

Your letter is not designed for publication — but for my own satisfaction and that of friends who wish the liberty of speaking of it. I voted with you upon *every* subject but one — I thought it best to defer any action till towards the close of the session — You thought otherwise — But your course in opposition to that of Mr. Calhoun I sustained throughout by speeches & votes.

Very respectfully  
& very truly yours  
H. W. Hilliard

Honbl  
Jno M. Berrien

<sup>9</sup>Abraham W. Venable, a Democratic Congressman from North Carolina, who attended and served as secretary of the Southern Caucus.

<sup>10</sup>Dr. John W. Jones, a Whig Congressman from Georgia, who attended the Southern Caucus.

## BOOK REVIEW

Russell H. Conwell. *Magnolia Journey A Union Veteran Revisits the Former Confederate States*. Arranged and Edited By Joseph C. Cates. (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, Southern Historical Publications No. 17, 1974. Pp. xiv, 190. \$6.75).

In 1869 Russell H. Conwell, a native New Englander, undertook a journalistic foray into the former Confederacy. His particular goal was to describe the then peaceful battle fields of the Civil War. Such other places and events of interest encountered he also expected to describe. Underwriting his journey was the *Boston Daily Evening Traveller*, a journal alert, and no doubt correctly, to its readers' interests. Conwell's qualifications for such an exhausting venture (it took three months) were his age, twenty-six, his former status as a Union soldier who had seen action in Virginia and Carolina, and his position as a reporter. Later Conwell was a lawyer, public lecturer (he originated the famous "Acres of Diamonds" talk), ordained Baptist minister, author, college professor, and founder of Temple University in Philadelphia.

The book lends itself to a "good news" "bad news" breakdown. The bad news lies in the packaging and, to a lesser degree, in the quality of the articles. The book is not indexed and there is no bibliography. The printing appears to have been done with type closely resembling that produced by an ordinary typewriter. None of this is Professor Carter's fault. Conwell's articles consisted of 25 letters as they appeared originally. Editor Carter had carefully divided them into some 83 episodes and arranged them in logical order. The problem is that Conwell was not particularly insightful, and the modern reader has to pay a heavy price wading through his prose to find something meaningful. Conwell's reporting of scenes in Alabama is limited to two fairly interesting essays of Montgomery and Mobile.

All of this brings up the debatable question of whether the work is important enough to merit publication as a book. If the answer is yes, then the good news is that Professor Carter was the right man for the job. His hard work is obvious throughout, and he has been indefatigable in identifying and clarifying vague points and obscure people and events. Moreover, his introductions displays a fine, incisive writing style. The reader

comes away from the book distressed by its publication format, and not sure about the importance of the vignettes, but with high respect for Professor Carter's work.

William Warren Rogers  
Florida State University

*The American Territorial System.* Ed. by John Porter Bloom.  
(Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1973. xv + 248 pp.  
\$10.00.)

This valuable collection of essays is the result of the first conference on the history of the territories of the United States held in November 1969 at the National Archives Building, Washington, D.C. The material is divided into six sections, most of which contain a brief introduction by John Porter Bloom, followed by one or two papers, a discussion of sources, formal comment by an authority, and in two cases, some discussion notes.

The first section includes two pieces honoring Clarence Edwin Carter, first editor of *The Territorial Papers of the United States*. The second section is entitled "The Northwest Ordinance," third, "The Territories and the Congress," fourth, "Territorial Courts of the Far West," fifth, "The Territories: Land and Politics," and finally, "The Territories in the Twentieth Century."

Space is lacking to comment on each paper, but this generalization can be made: all are of high calibre. There is not a weak sister among them. Every paper reflects the professional expertise of a dedicated historian in the field. The brief essay on sources that accompanies five of the sections can be of great aid to the historian entering the field of territorial history. Only the commentators come up weak, the comments by J.W. Smurr being especially shallow and denigrating.

Such a wealth of information is housed within these papers, and their scholastic level is so high, that it is difficult to single out the very strong ones. However, this reviewer considers Arthur Bestor's "Constitutionalism and the Settlement of the West: The Attainment of Consensus, 1754-1784" the best of the group and Kenneth W. Owens' "Pattern and Structure in West-



tern Territorial Politics" as ranking a close second. Professor Bestor's paper is superb for the thoroughness of its research, its excellent organization, and the philosophical assumptions he finds in decisions made by the founding fathers. Professor Owens' paper is exceptional for the way he scrapes off the veneer of idealism and platitudes and reveals humanity at work in the territories, mercenary, grasping, and selfish.

The papers by Jo Tice Bloom, Robert W. Johannsen, William Lee Knecht, Thomas G. Alexander, Robert W. Larson and Robert R. Robbins all add depth of knowledge to the still scant bibliography of American territorial history.

Every American historian needs some knowledge of the territorial system. This book, while not providing an unbroken stream of information, nevertheless offers an enormous amount of factual material. It is therefore a valuable rarity, for the papers of most conferences range from excellent to poor with scant mediocrity the norm. But this conference was different. Its papers constitute a major contribution to territorial history.

Richard A. Bartlett  
Florida State University

*Tennessee During the Revolutionary War.* By Samuel Cole Williams with a new introduction by Frank B. Williams, Jr., and index by Muriel C. Spoden. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1974 [republication of the original 1944 edition]). 290 w/index. \$8.75.

There are several reasons to commend heartily the University of Tennessee Press for republishing under the auspices of the Tennessee American Revolutionary Bicentennial Commission Samuel Cole Williams' *Tennessee During the Revolutionary War*.

Primary among these reasons, of course, is that this republication makes available once again an important monograph which has become a collector's item in its original 1944 edition. Williams' treatment of the transmontane people during the period 1776-1784 is today, as it was when first published, virtu-

ally unparalleled in its consideration of the subject. As such, it provides an important record of the participation of the "men of the western waters" in the several military encounters of the "Revolution in the West," including the pivotal Battle of King's Mountain. It is, however, more than a military history. Williams provides an enlightening description of the society in which these volunteer soldiers lived. He discusses the effect of forests and rivers on that society, the attempts to push that society farther into the forests, and the encounters with Indians in both familiar forests and those more distant. Williams' treatment of these subjects is enhanced in this new volume by an expanded index prepared by Muriel C. Spoden.

Another important reason for making this book available once again is to pay homage to its author and to the type of historian he was. This end is well served by the efforts of Frank B. Williams, Jr., and Pollyanna Creekmore, both of East Tennessee State University. Professor Williams contributes an illuminating introduction rich with the details of Samuel Cole Williams' life. Successively lawyer, judge, dean, and chairman of the Tennessee Historical Commission, Samuel Cole Williams was ever a dedicated antiquarian and amateur historian. By the standards of professional historians his work is flawed by his antiquarian interests, his frequent disregard for proper footnote form, his rather graceless prose, and his sometimes uncritical celebration of his protagonists. But as a compiler of source material and as a prodigious chronicler (evidenced by Miss Creekmore's bibliography) of a people largely overlooked by those historians who are careful of footnote form, write gracefully and avoid any hint of antiquarian detail, Judge Williams' work clearly deserves to live on through this volume.

Finally, it is important to commend both the publisher of the book and the Tennessee American Revolutionary Bicentennial Commission which sponsored the publication for having the good common sense to undertake this project as a Bicentennial activity. Tainted neither by the fuzzy-mindedness of some Bicentennial projects nor the hucksterism of other, the republication of a book like *Tennessee During the Revolutionary War* is a superb way to celebrate our national anniversary.

Lawrence C. Henry  
Tennessee Historical Commission

*Colonial Pensacola.* James R. McGovern, ed. (Pensacola: Pensacola Bicentennial Commission, 1974. 124 pp. illus. \$5.00).

*Andrew Jackson and Pensacola.* James R. McGovern, ed. (Pensacola: Pensacola Bicentennial Commission, 1974. 110 pp. illus. \$5.00).

These two volumes from the Pensacola Bicentennial Series, a commemorative publishing venture by an interested group of Pensacola businessmen and civic leaders, constitute the first efforts of a projected ten-volume series covering the history of Pensacola from 1559 through World War II.

*Colonial Pensacola* (Vol. I) is a potpourri of collected documents divided by three summary articles concerned with a specific time-period in Pensacola's history. There is nothing new in Irving Leonard's "Pensacola's First Spanish Period (1698-1763)." Certainly no recent original research is in evidence. It is, in fact, based on documents and works translated and published long ago, many by Dr. Leonard himself who in his *Don Carlos de Sigüenza y Gongora* (1929) and *Spanish Approach to Pensacola 1689-93* (1939) made valuable contributions to the literature and documentation of early North American history. While events leading up to and including the founding of Fort San Carlos (1689-1700) is fully described, the early years of Pensacola (1700-1718) remain a "dark period," which is lamentable in view of its importance and the wealth of calendared documents presently residing in the AGI in Sevilla and the AGN in Mexico.

If, however, colonial Pensacola (1700-1763) has yet to be closely researched, the same cannot be said for the so-called "Second Spanish period." Although Jack D. L. Holmes' article, "Pensacola: Spanish Dominion, 1781-1821," is but a concise summary of that era it is nevertheless an example of sound research based on careful use of original source materials. (It is a fact, incidentally, that the diligent Dr. Holmes in his numerous guides and studies (*Documentos inéditos para La Historia de La Louisiana*, 1792-1810, 1963, *A Guide to Spanish Louisiana*, 1970, etc.) has, more than any modern objectivist, helped lift the veil from Spanish Louisiana, at least from the Spanish point of view.

The English period in Pensacola history has been less well-covered by regional historians, but Robert R. Rea, a recognized authority in British colonial history, presents, in "Pensacola under the British (1763-1781)," a prescient, well-written summarization based on careful examination of available sources.

*Andrew Jackson and Pensacola* (Vol. II of the Series) contains, apart from articles by such specialists as William S. Coker and Frank L. Owsley, a number of hitherto unpublished documents, including two letters from Jackson to George Walton in 1822-23. James A. Servies, Director of Libraries for the University of West Florida, contributes a useful bibliography of various works relating to Jackson's Pensacola associations, while Pat Dodson, a Pensacola businessman, presents an interesting description of local "Jacksonia."

Both volumes of the series, skillfully handled as they are, should help increase regional as well as local interest in the preservation activities of the Pensacola Community. For forthcoming issues, Editor McGovern might do well to insist on a more elegant shade and texture of paper, a stitched binding, and the inclusion of French and Spanish accent marks, all of which would add little to production costs of the reasonably-priced works.

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Friedrich Heer. *Challenge of Youth*. (Translated from the Germany by Geoffrey Skelton). The University of Alabama 1974.

"One generation passeth away, and another generation commeth: but the earth abideth forever . . . and there is no new thing under the sun." Ecclesiastes 1:4,9. This Old Testament passage succinctly sums up Professor Heer's detailed reflection on the phenomenon of youth rebellion down through the ages of history. He sees variation only in the settings and particular motivations of movements described as the "crown prince conflict," in which young people, waiting in the wings to succeed their elders, lose their patience and attempt to abort the succession process. Dr. Heer, Professor of the History of

Ideas at the University of Vienna, is not optimistic that youth rebellions will ever bring about a world that fits the pattern of the ideals espoused by the promoters of such uprisings, nor does he see an end to them. "... young people adopt new fathers to lead them on the long march through the deserts of history into the promised land . . . thousands of years of disappointment and apparent failure have not succeeded in robbing our great youth movements of the will to pursue the great dream." His concluding rationalization may be the only hopeful note we might gain from an otherwise depressing picture: "And it is to their efforts of will that we owe all the successive stages of our civilisation."

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